

CRUDGINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY 2019-2020



School Attendance Policy 2019/20 - Document Status

Date of policy creation	6.9.19	Named responsibility	Adam Ames
Date of policy inception	9.9.19	Named responsibility	Adam Ames
Date of policy adoption by Governing Body	Meeting 26 th September	Named responsibility	Governing Body
Date of policy review for 2019/20	September 2020	Named responsibility	Governing Body

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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 90% (and below) attendance rate.

Schools will wish to encourage and promote good attendance in as many ways and for as many pupils as they can, 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 will 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 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.

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 Out Of School (COOS)' protocol.
- 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 Developing a Framework for a Whole-School Attendance Policy

A Framework for a Whole-School Attendance Policy

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

Philosophy

Crudginton Primary 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 returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

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 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.

Procedures

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

- follow 'First day contact' procedures and contact the parent by telephone/text message, or if the parent is unavailable send a standard letter requesting information,
- consider sending a second letter if an explanation has still not been received after three days of unexplained absence or send a School Attendance Letter (SAL),
- refer to the school's 'Nominated Attendance Person' (NAP) or Education Welfare Officer (EWO), to follow up absence if no response is received after 5 days of absence and consider a referral to '*Family Connect*' if no contact can be made with the parent,
- 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 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.

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.

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. 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 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
- 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

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
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- Liaising closely with the school's NAP/EWO, if appropriate
- Recording (and retaining) carefully, all telephone messages
- 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

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 must be kept accurately, neatly and any paper copies must be marked in ink. The register 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 and consistent registration system is crucial if poor attendance and punctuality within a school are to be tackled. 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.

3.2 Marking the Register

(See also DfE guidance 'School Attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' 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. 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 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:

Crudgington uses a management Information systems (CMIS) 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
- an official monthly register 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,
- 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

3.4 Removal from Roll

(See also DfE guidance 'School Attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (November 2016) and 'Children Missing Education – Statutory Guidance for local authorities (September 2016)

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 move the Admissions Team or Attendance & Pupil Tracking Officer will contact the new LA to ascertain that the child is, in fact, living in the area and has been registered at a school. If confirmed, the LA will then advise the headteacher that the pupil can be removed from school roll and registers, retrospectively from the date given for the move.
- 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 in-year transfer form (available from the host school) and this should then be forwarded to the Admissions Team at Telford & Wrekin Council. A date for the transfer should be requested and the subsequent transfer must be made via the Admissions Team who will inform the parent that a place is available to them at the new school. Once contacted by the

new school and admission confirmed, the pupil can then be removed from the host school roll.

- c) Where a parent informs the school **in writing** that they intend to teach the child **otherwise than at school**, the school must inform the LA who will arrange for the educational provision to be checked by the LA Advisory Teacher for Elective Home Education.
- d) Where a pupil has been continuously absent for not less than 4 weeks and the school has made extensive enquiries which have failed to locate the pupil. In such cases a school representative or 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 head teacher 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 uploaded by the school onto the S2S system and the Attendance & Pupil Tracking Officer notified to ensure the pupil is tracked.**
- 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). Extensive enquiries 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 2012, which allows schools to set academic requirements for entry into sixth-form.

It is not lawful to remove a pupil from a school roll simply because the pupil has a poor behaviour or poor attendance record.

3.5 Professional Development Days

Where schools are proposing to take a PD day, it is good practice for head teachers to inform neighbouring schools and to ensure that parents are given sufficient notice

of training days. This would enable 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 weekly attendance at specific 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 hold a great deal of information about attendance which is not always fully used. 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 termly or yearly, based on year groups, can indicate factors such as:

- declining attendance in years groups,
- 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 of the summer holiday
- 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.

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.

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 prevent the child from attending school because of this belief.
- Separation anxiety: The parent and/or child may be frightened of separation from each other. Domestic violence may also be a factor.
- The child may be needed to contribute to the family income by working either within the home or outside.
- The child may be the only significant carer within the family.
- The parent may be physically or psychologically ill.
- There may be social issues which parents may feel are of more importance than educational issues.
- Financial restraints, 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 are guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the

same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if late arrival, after the register closes, is not resolved.

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 indicate 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 result of a lack of firm parenting; the child is confused and often left to cope alone at a very young age.

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.

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 can request advice from 'Family Connect' on the issue.

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 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.

6.0 Following up Absence

Every school should have effective and recognised procedures for identifying and following up absences. All pupil absence should be followed up as soon as possible. The 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**,
- a standard letter should be sent home after three days of absence, unless the parent/carer has already indicated that the child is likely to be returning at a later, agreed date. This should be recorded with the date of sending in the register or similar if computerised,
- a school attendance letter (SAL1), generated by CMIS should be sent when a pupil's attendance begins to deteriorate,
- subsequently a SAL2 letter should be sent if no improvement is made, before a referral to the Attendance Support Team,
- all correspondence relating to attendance concerns should be signed and a copy retained by school,
- 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,
- where explanations for absence are not satisfactory, or where absence persists, the Headteacher/Year tutor should invite the parent(s) to an Attendance Concern Meeting (ACM) in school to discuss any difficulties which may prevent a pupil from attending school. If parents do not attend or send apologies, a referral should be made to the AST,
- 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,
- a report on each pupil's attendance can be generated on a weekly basis so that cumulative absence can be seen at a glance and followed up consistently,
- all contact with parents should be recorded in the pupil's school file.

7.0 Leave of Absence during Term Time

See also 'Attendance Guidance & Procedures for Schools' Section 7 Leave of Absence during Term Time Policy for more information.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulation 2006 previously allowed Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers could also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 Regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. 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 speak to the school before they book any holidays. Schools 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 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.

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 or prospectus.

"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 from ethnic minority families, schools should ensure that full account has been taken, not only of the regulations and DfE guidelines, but also of the situation of 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. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Schools should ensure that all parents are aware of the school's policy on absence. In the case of ethnic minority parents, special care should be taken to ensure that the regulations are fully explained and understood. Interpreters should be used if necessary or, 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.**

As a result of a restructure which ended in April 2012, EWO posts are no longer funded by the Local Authority. However, there is EWO support available through a 'Traded - Service Level Agreement' that schools can benefit from. 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).

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 or, if appropriate, through a referral to the Learning Support Advisory Teacher or an Educational Psychologist,
- 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.

10.2 Rewards

Schools and AST can play an important role in encouraging attendance by providing rewards for good and improved attendance and punctuality, both for individuals and classes or groups. 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,
- a mention in assembly,
- the award of badges,
- the giving of prizes such as mascots or a cup for the highest class or 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,
- 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
- a reintegration meeting is undertaken with all stakeholders

10.6 Children in Care

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.

10.7 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. 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.

10.8 Primary Schools – Attendance initiatives

Schemes such as 'Early Bird' promote punctuality and attendance. 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 fathered 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 Yr group, pupils who do not reach an agreed overall attendance %

11.0 The AST Guidance for Referrals and Legal Intervention for Schools

Introduction

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. 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?

At Crudgington Primary School the Headteacher is responsible for making referrals to the AST

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
- suspected illegal child employment

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 letters should have been sent to parent(s) by school
- The child will have the opportunity to discuss things at school and put forward their 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 intervention) 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 CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) or Social Care, if appropriate.

Where there is already social work involvement the designated safeguarding lead 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) 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.

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.
See flowchart attached.

The amounts stated on the Penalty Notices are £60 for those who pay within 21 days and £120 for those who pay within 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 for the

purpose of a family holiday, 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 **should not** be given leave of absence for shows, film work etc. without a performance licence.

It would be helpful if schools would let 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
- l) 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.

Appendix 1 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 dated (date) requesting permission for leave during term time for (pupils name) for (number of days), (dates), for the purpose of a family holiday).

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. **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 holidays may be subject to a penalty notice fine of £60 payable per parent, per child, increasing to £120 each if not paid within 28 days. Failure to pay this fine may lead to court proceedings.

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)