

# **Pupil Attendance Policy**

**September 2025**

**For Next Review and Approval by the Board of Connect  
Academy Trust, September 2026**

## Amendments

Version	Date	Detail
1	Feb 2016	Newly adopted policy
2	Feb 2019	No Change
3	March 2022	No Change
4	November 2022	Updated with Torbay Schools and 2022 DfE guidance
5	Sept 2024	Updated with national falling attendance rates and latest DfE guidance August 2024 which is available <a href="#">here</a> . Connect will use the updated DfE guidance and codes from 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2024.
6	December 2024	Updated to ask for medical evidence to be provided in some cases.
7	September 2025	Attendance leaflet added to be used in conjunction with the policy.

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## **Pupil Attendance Policy (including Term Time Leave Statement)**

### **1. Individual School Statements and Attendance Champions.**

These have been added to inform parents/carers of the arrangements at each Connect school and will be available on each school website. Parents/carers should familiarise themselves with these statements and follow the guidance provided, working together with the school to ensure high attendance and therefore good pupil progress. Each Connect school now has a Senior Attendance Champion, responsible for championing and improving attendance across the school. You can find details of Attendance Champions in the table below and on school websites.

<b>School</b>	<b>Attendance Lead/Champion</b>
Cockington	John-Paul Sharman & Zoe Davies
Eden Park	Hayley McCrum & Gemma McManaway
Haytor View	Claire Hepher
Eggbuckland Vale	Susie Wilson
Leigham	Cathy Dowsett
Manadon Vale	Jo Stapleton
Preston	Jane Stead
Thornbury	Emma Mantell
Widely Court	Heidi Taylor

### **2. Aims**

This policy aims to set out the principles and broad practices to promote good attendance, in particularly the procedures for managing absence and improving attendance for those whom attendance is of concern. It is noted that not every situation is the same, and the Trust will exercise discretion in applying the policy, within the principles and guidelines. It is acknowledged that most parents value education highly and ensure that their child has good attendance and punctuality.

Further details of practice for promoting good attendance are to be found in each individual school. In this case 'Trust' refers to schools or settings. 'Parent' refers to anyone who fulfils parental duties including grandparents and carers. 'Headteacher' refers to key school decisions, which may be delegated to the Senior Attendance Champion or another member of staff.

The Trust attendance aims are:

- to maintain and promote very good attendance (above 98%) for all children
- to raise within each school community the importance of good attendance
- to support the development of a consistent approach to managing attendance
- to exceed school attendance targets

### **3. Principles**

- Attendance is everyone's responsibility
- It is every child's right to an education
- Good attendance is closely related to academic achievement and well being
- Good attendance forms patterns for later life, so enabling pupils to become responsible citizens, and to achieve economic stability

- Each Connect school will help children to feel that they 'belong' and therefore attending school daily is part of their routine
- Parents have direct legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance and punctuality
- Pupils who are late miss vital learning, and often this affects the whole school day
- Decision making about the implementation of the policy in individual schools is within the Headteacher's sole jurisdiction

#### 4. Attendance Expectations and what has changed

September 2025 expectations:

- Attendance is Everybody's Business
- Attendance is a priority for all Connect Schools
- Schools now have a duty to report 10 or more days of unauthorised absence to the LA
- Parents/carers also have duty to fulfil their part of an EHCP, ie ensuring their child has very good attendance

***We know that every day counts...but what does this mean over a school year?***

100% attendance	No days missed.	Excellent	Gives your child the very best chance of success and gets them off to a flying start in life.
98% attendance	4 days of absence. 4 days of learning missed.	Very Good	Provides a very good chance of success and great start in life.
95% attendance	9 days of absence. 1 week and 4 days of learning missed.	Good	This could be better, as even missing a few days will make a difference
90% attendance (persistent absence)	19 days of absence. 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed.	Concerning	Less chance of success. Makes it hard to progress.
85% attendance	27 days of absence. 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed.	Very concerning	Serious implications on learning and progress.
80% attendance	38 days of absence. 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed. Almost half a term missed.	Extremely concerning	As above
75% attendance	47 days of absence. 9 weeks and 2 days of learning missed. Almost one whole term missed.	Extremely concerning	As above
50% attendance	1.5 terms missed	Severe absence	As above

#### 5. Parental Responsibilities

Ensure that your child always arrives on time and ready to learn.

#### Understanding that Attendance Is Everybody's Business

Ensure that your child is at school every day unless:

- they are too ill to attend (not minor illness/issue, eg a cold or over-slept)
- they have hospital appointment (non-routine)
- doctor or dental appointment (urgent and cannot be arranged outside school hours)
- agreed activity (by the headteacher) e.g. dance exam, national sports trials
- authorised leave (see Appendix I – Term Time Leave Statement)

In the event of absence due to illness:

- contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- contact the school for each subsequent day of illness

Unacceptable reasons for absence:

- unauthorised holiday, including surprises
- Birthdays (any)
- shopping
- routine medical and dental appointments which should be scheduled for holiday time
- excessive medical absence which may need investigation
- leaving early (or arriving late back) for a weekend away

Unacceptable reasons for lateness

- overslept
- running late
- regular excuses relating to transport
- dropping off younger siblings
- disruption at home

Whilst it is acknowledged that there might be the odd unforeseen difficulty as above, this is not expected to be a regular occurrence.

## **6. School Responsibilities**

- Understanding from all staff that Attendance Is Everybody's Business
- Endeavour to provide an appropriate curriculum to meet needs of the individual
- provide a welcoming, inclusive ethos in our schools and sense of belonging
- Endeavour to work in partnership with parents to support and encourage their child's success at school, including drawing on other agencies where appropriate
- Make every effort to meet our statutory responsibilities to ensure good attendance and therefore meet our targets for attendance
- Submit attendance figures to the Government
- Inform parents of expectations e.g. our annual letter, newsletters etc
- Take a register morning and afternoon
- Notify parents if we are concerned about a pupil's absence (at CEO/Headteacher's discretion)
- Monitor more rigorously pupils who have attendance or punctuality issues (at Yellow and Red)
- Liaise with Educational Welfare Officer (EWO/SIMILAR) if there are more serious concerns (Orange/Red) or attendance is not improving
- Provide attendance figures to each family in the annual report
- Set attendance targets with the parent/carer and/or EWO/SIMILAR

- Provide a stepped approach to families where attendance, including punctuality is a concern. The Headteacher has discretion about the relevance of which stage, at which time.
- Where the stepped letters have not had an impact, invite parents of poor attenders to an attendance meeting involving the appropriate officer/service, which may include a Governor or Trust representative present
- In serious cases, or for poor attendance or punctuality, in partnership with the Local Authority, penalty fines will be considered which could lead to prosecution of the parent
- Understand the link between attendance and pupil welfare, and consider where, in occasional cases to make a referral to Children's Social Care.

## **7. Process for reporting and following up absence/lateness**

Alongside accurate recording of attendance and absence, effective schools have robust day to day processes to track and follow up absence and poor punctuality which are rigorously applied across the school.

All schools are expected to develop processes that meet the needs of their pupils and contexts. As a minimum this should include arrangements to:

- Proactively manage lateness and set out in their attendance policy the length of time the register will be open, after which a pupil will be marked as absent. This should be the same for every session, and depending on the structure of the school day, not longer than either 30 minutes after the session begins, or the length of the form time or first lesson in which registration takes place
- Expect parents to contact the school when their child is absent to explain the reason and put in place processes to contact parents on the first day of absence where a reason has not been provided. If absence continues without explanation, further contact should be made to ensure safeguarding
- Identify any absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents (and where appropriate foster carers and/or social workers) to understand why and when the pupil will return. Where absence is recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code should be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 working days after the session
- Where reasonably possible, schools should hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. This is good practice to give the school additional options to make contact with a responsible adult
- Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. Schools should avoid headline percentages and instead make this understandable for parents (e.g. the amount of time missed and the impact on the pupil's learning)
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals
- Make the necessary statutory data returns to the local authority
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

## **Types of Absence**

### **Illness**

- In most cases, absences for illness that are reported using the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

- For prolonged absence due to illness, the school may require parents/carers to provide the school with evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription. Providing this evidence will help the Headteacher to make an informed decision as to whether it is appropriate to authorise the absence or not. Where the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent/carer. Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school on the first or subsequent days may not be authorised.

### **Medical or dental appointments**

- Parents should make every effort to ensure that medical appointments are made outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, pupils should attend school for as much of that day as possible.
- To help the Headteacher decide if it is appropriate to authorise the absence, it is recommended that a notification of the appointment (or similar) is shown to the school. You will be asked to provide this when making the request ahead of the appointment or at the point of collection. This can be via email, letter or a text message shown to the member of staff, but must include the child's name, date and appointment details.

## **8. Religious observance**

Connect Academy Trust will follow the latest DfE guidance (February 2024):

- The pupil is absent on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body the parent/carer belong to (not the parent/carer themselves).
- As a general rule, 'a day exclusively set apart for religious observance' is a day when the pupil's parent/carer would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from their employment in order to mark the occasion. If in doubt, schools should seek advice from the parent's religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.
- if a religious body sets apart a single day for a religious observance and the parent/carer applies for more than one day, the school may only record one day using this code; the rest of the time would need a leave of absence, and this is granted at the school's discretion as set out under Code C.

Headteachers may authorise up to 3 days a year for religious observance, which has been requested and agreed in advance. Headteachers will consider each child's current attendance and, where necessary, discuss any concerns with parents/carers before making a decision.

## **9. Process for Monitoring and Responding to Concerns**

Attendance is informally monitored weekly and concerns raised informally. If there are queries over unexplained absence, a phone call will be made home or letter sent. If attendance does not improve, additional monitoring or advice will be sought from the appropriate officer/service

### **Stage 1**

If a pupil's attendance/punctuality is causing concern and the pupil has missed 3 or more days in a term, a general letter is sent informing the parents that their child's attendance is of concern, and it will now be monitored for a period of 4 weeks, during an improvement in attendance will be expected. An attendance print-out or link will be enclosed.

### **Stage 2**

If attendance does not improve after 4 school weeks, a second letter is sent giving specific details of absence, together with an attendance print out. Copies of this letter may be shared with the

appropriate Attendance Officer for information.

### Stage 3

If attendance deteriorates, does not improve, or is, without good reason, below 90%, or because of repeated lates, a Stage 3 letter will be sent, inviting the parent to an attendance meeting at the school following a phone call to discuss attendance. This will be attended by a senior member of staff and the appropriate officer. An action plan will be drawn up at this meeting to agree targets and strategies for improving attendance. The consequences of continued poor attendance will be discussed e.g. Verbal Warning/Penalty Fine.

### Stage 4A

Attendance has improved since the meeting. Attendance will continue to be monitored, but no further action at this time.

### Stage 4B

If there is no improvement, further action will proceed, a meeting will be arranged with the Headteacher and/or other senior staff. The result of the meeting may include a Penalty Fine being issued.

### Stage 5

Attendance continues to be poor and no improvement has been made, a meeting will be arranged and an action plan will be put in place. Local Authority (LA) informed of attendance concerns.

NB. The timescale for the stages is a guide. Non-compliance or the occurrence of serious concerns may result in the timescale being fast tracked.

### Stage 6

Weekly or fortnightly reviews of absence will take place. Action plan will be monitored weekly.

## **10. Persistent and Severe Absence**

The definition of persistent absence is 90% attendance or lower and severe absence is 50% attendance or lower. This is very concerning and will have an impact on a child's learning and progress.

All schools should work with the local communities (including voluntary and community groups) to help remove the barriers to attendance that families experience. In some cases, families will experience the same or similar barriers to attendance for multiple children who attend different schools in the area. As such, it is of mutual benefit for such schools to work together where possible. This will be particularly beneficial in supporting transition between feeder schools.

Schools of all types, local authorities and other local partners should work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to the pupil (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or the police where there are extra-familial harms). Local authorities and schools (of all types) are expected to have a regular Targeting Support Meetings at least termly. Further, to facilitate timely collaborative working across partners, all schools are also legally required to share information from their registers with the local authority.

As a minimum this includes:

- Every time a pupil's name is to be added to, or deleted from, the school admission register outside of standard transition times (including the statutory reason for deletion). For deletions this must take place before the deletion, and for additions it must be no later than 5 working days after the addition.
- The name and address of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has missed school for 10 days or more without the absence being recorded as authorised. Local authorities should agree the frequency this must be shared with all schools in their area. This should be no less frequently than once per calendar month.

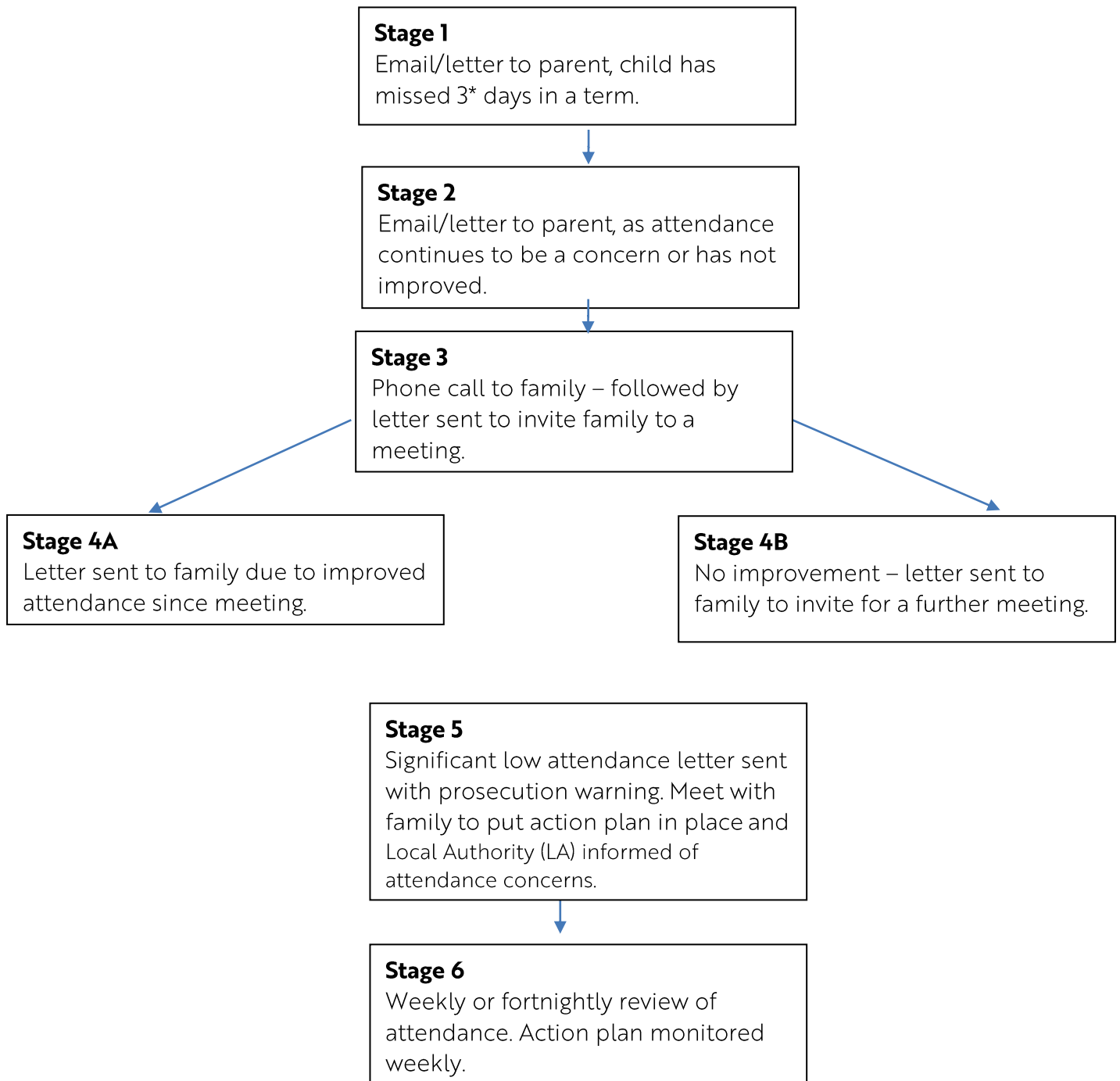
Local authorities may seek, and schools are expected to provide, more frequent or comprehensive sharing of data than the statutory minimum where it is essential to fulfilling their obligations under the Education Acts and the expectations set out in Section 4 of this guidance. To avoid any unnecessary burdens for schools this should always be automatic from school registers and not require additional manual data collection/ returns (e.g. through a data aggregator directly from management information systems). This collaboration allows local authorities to facilitate quicker, more efficient joint working and better target their area wide attendance strategy.

Similarly, whilst the law provides access to registers of maintained schools for local authority officers who need access to fulfil their obligations under the Education Acts, all schools, regardless of whether or not they are covered by that legislation, are still expected to provide the local authority with access to support joint working between schools, trusts and local authorities.

The pandemic highlighted the importance of regular data sharing and therefore DfE has been working to establish a better, more timely flow of pupil level attendance data across schools, trusts, local authorities, and DfE, without placing any additional administrative burdens on schools. Most schools have already signed up, but once fully established, this will allow data to be collected directly from all schools' electronic registers. Collection happens via a secure data aggregator at no cost to schools and without requiring any manual inputting of information.

Longer term DfE's intention is for this new method of data sharing to replace existing statutory data returns to local authorities and DfE, including the school census. This will reduce the burden on schools and improve our collective understanding of attendance patterns at local, regional, and national levels to identify issues and challenges more quickly.

### **Stages of Attendance Monitoring**



*\*this number may vary according to the individual circumstances of a school*

The Appendices below are templates for the schools to use. They may be slightly altered or added to according to the needs of the school community. If parents fail to attend meetings, the meeting will continue anyway and appropriate authorities informed.

## Appendix A - Stage 1 Attendance and Punctuality email to parent/carer

*Dear Parent and Carer of INSERT NAME*

As you know your child has been absent 3 days so far, this academic year. If there is anything we can do to support you, we are here. Please contact your child's class teacher or INSERT NAME (Attendance Lead) and INSERT NAME (Family Support Worker) if you would like to have an informal conversation about your child.

At INSERT NAME primary school, we believe that our community is stronger together, with all of our pupils in school, on time, every day. We are aiming to provide a limitless education for your child through active, meaningful and engaging opportunities. By attending school every day, we believe we can achieve this success.

We will be in touch again to offer a supportive meeting if this low attendance pattern continues. Please do contact us if there is anything we can do to help. We recognise that some low attendance may be due to illness. The intention of this email is to keep families informed of their child's authorised and unauthorised absences.

Yours sincerely,

*We know that every day counts...but what does this mean over a school year?*

100% attendance	No days missed.	Excellent	Gives your child the best chance of success and gets them off to a flying start.
98% attendance	4 days of absence. 4 days of learning missed.	Very Good	Provides a very good chance of success and great start in life.
95% attendance	9 days of absence. 1 week and 4 days of learning missed.	Good	This could be better, as even missing a few days will make a difference
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80% attendance	38 days of absence. 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed. Almost half a term missed.	Extremely concerning	As above
75% attendance	47 days of absence. 9 weeks and 2 days of learning missed.	Extremely concerning	As above

	<i>Almost one whole term missed.</i>		
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## Appendix B - stage 2 – email to parent.

*Dear Parents and Carers*

As you know, your child INSERT NAME has missed a further ... days since our previous message. They have now been absent ... days so far, this academic year. If there is anything we can do to support you, we are here. Please contact INSERT NAME (Attendance Lead) and INSERT NAME (Family Support Worker) if you would like to have an informal conversation about your child.

At INSERT NAME Primary School, we believe that our community is stronger together, with all of our pupils in school, on time, every day. We are aiming to provide a limitless education for your child through active, meaningful and engaging opportunities. By attending school every day, we believe we can achieve this success.

We will be in touch again to request a meeting with you if we have ongoing concerns about your child's attendance. Please do contact us if there is anything we can do to help. We recognise that some low attendance may be due to illness. The intention of this email is to keep families informed of their child's authorised and unauthorised absences.

Yours sincerely,

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### Appendix C - Stage 3 Attendance Letter

Phone call to arrange meeting with follow up letter sent to invite families in for an attendance meeting with **Name**. Verbally mention penalty notice during meeting. Check with LA SEND team re needs affecting attendance before any penalty notice is issued.

Dear INSERT PARENT NAME

Re: School Attendance

Following our phone call conversation today where we discussed INSERT NAME'S attendance.

Thank you for confirming our recorded reasons for absence on the following days:

- INSERT REASONS FOR ABSENCE – INCLUDE NO REASON GIVEN YET (N)
- INSERT REASONS FOR ABSENCE
- INSERT REASONS FOR ABSENCE

We look forward to meeting you in person on ..... to work together to find ways of supporting you with your child's attendance. As we discussed on the phone, we have included a copy of your child's attendance record for this academic year for your reference.

Yours sincerely,

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#### **Appendix D - Stage 4A – Improvement since attendance meeting – Send via email as well as letter.**

Dear Parent,

We have noticed an improvement in CHILD'S NAME since our meeting.

We would like to thank you for working together with us and for the effort and actions you have taken. We hope the improvement in CHILD'S NAME continues at least throughout this academic year. We will continue to monitor the attendance of all children.

If you need any further support regarding attendance, please do get in touch with us and we are happy to try and help. Thank you again for your efforts to make this improvement.

Yours sincerely,

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## Appendix E - Stage 4B – No improvement since attendance meeting – Send via email as well as letter.

Dear INSERT NAME,

We spoke to you on INSERT DATE regarding attendance. We notice from our records that INSERT NAME attendance is still very low. They have missed a further ... days which means they have missed .... days in total this academic year.

We have arranged for our School's Education Attendance Officer, or Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher (delete as appropriate), to have a meeting with you and ourselves to discuss INSERT NAME's, attendance and to plan ways to improve it. The meeting will take place on INSERT DATE AND TIME.

It is really important that you attend. At the meeting we will look closely at INSERT NAME'S attendance record and discuss ways we can support you further in making sure there is an improvement. Ongoing persistent low attendance can lead to statutory measures being used to ensure a more regular attendance pattern at school. This outcome is not desirable. Penalty notices are used for 10 sessions (5 days) or more of unauthorised absence within a 10-week period.

Please note, even though this is a formal meeting; its purpose is to support you in helping to improve INSERT NAME attendance. If you wish to discuss any of the above, please feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

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## Appendix F - Stage 5, still no improvement

*Dear Parent / Carer*

Further to the letter INSERT DATE, I am writing to advise you that we remain extremely concerned about INSERT NAME'S poor school attendance. INSERT NAME continues to have unexplained and unauthorised absence.

Each school day comprises of 2 sessions, morning and afternoon, therefore if INSERT NAME is absent for a day this will count as 2 absences. If INSERT NAME arrives after 09.30am, the time at which the morning registers close, this is also recorded as an unauthorised absence, using the U code.

Between 06 September 2024 and TODAYS DATE, INSERT NAME had an overall attendance rate of \*\*\*\*  
Total sessions of attendance: \*\*\*\* out of a possible \*\*\*\* sessions.

Total unauthorised absences: \*\*. Total authorised absences: \*\*

I have attached INSERT NAME's attendance record for your information, highlighting his/her absences and late arrivals to school.

The school will no longer authorize any absence due to illness, unless you receive medical proof that INSERT NAME is unwell. This can be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or information from a doctor.

As we have previously explained to you in conversations, emails, letters, meetings and home visits, it is your responsibility as INSERT NAME's parent to ensure your child attends school regularly - this includes arriving to school on time. This is a legal responsibility under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

If INSERT NAME continues to have unauthorised absence from school, you are at risk of being prosecuted by Plymouth City Council. We would like you to attend a meeting at XXXXXX School in order that we may discuss the situation. We have the following to date/time available next week for the non-attendance meeting:

. \*\*\*\*\*

Please contact the school office on 01752 \*\*\*\* or by email at\*\*\*\*\* by tomorrow at midday to confirm your attendance, so that we can plan accordingly.

The following people have also been invited to the meeting:

NAME – Education Welfare Officer (EWO/SIMILAR) (delete as appropriate)

NAME – Headteacher (delete as appropriate)

NAME – Deputy Headteacher (delete as appropriate)

NAME- School Family Support Worker

NAME - (SEND/attendance lead)

I hope that we can find a way to continue to work with you to improve INSERT NAME attendance and punctuality. If we are unable to meet, and INSERT NAME has any further unauthorised absence, please be advised that legal action may follow.

## Appendix G – Home visit – no reason given

Dear INSERT NAME

INSERT NAME Primary School staff visited your home today as your child is absent from school and you have not contacted us to tell us why. Unfortunately, there was no reply when they visited.

Parents and carers are expected to contact school on the morning of any absence, if their child is unable to attend school for any reason. As part of our school attendance and safeguarding procedures, we follow up any absences where a student is absent from school and the parent/carer has not contacted us to explain why.

Following up unexplained absences can take up a lot of staff time, so please do ensure you contact school as expected if your child is absent for any reason.

Please contact us as soon as possible and by ...INSERT TIME..... today at the latest, to explain the reason for your child's absence from school.

Yours sincerely

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90% attendance	19 days of absence. 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed.	Concerning	Less chance of success. Makes it hard to progress.
85% attendance	27 days of absence. 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed.	Very concerning	Serious implications on learning and progress.
80% attendance	38 days of absence. 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed. Almost half a term missed.	Extremely concerning	As above
75% attendance	47 days of absence. 9 weeks and 2 days of learning missed. Almost one whole term missed.	Extremely concerning	As above

## Appendix H – Action Plan

Improving Attendance Action Plan:

Pupil name:

Start date:

Parent/carer:

Review date:

School representative:

Reason(s) for absence:

Action to be taken:	By:	What/when will it happen?	How will we know it's working?	Review of actions:

We know that every day counts...but what does this mean over a school year?

100% attendance	No days missed.	Excellent	Gives your child the best chance of success and gets them off to a flying start.
98% attendance	4 days of absence. 4 days of learning missed.	Very Good	Provides a very good chance of success and great start in life.
95% attendance	9 days of absence. 1 week and 4 days of learning missed.	Good	This could be better, as even missing a few days will make a difference
90% attendance	19 days of absence. 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed.	Concerning	Less chance of success. Makes it hard to progress.
85% attendance	27 days of absence. 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed.	Very concerning	Serious implications on learning and progress.
80% attendance	38 days of absence. 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed.	Extremely concerning	As above

	<i>Almost half a term missed.</i>		
<i>75% attendance</i>	<i>47 days of absence. 9 weeks and 2 days of learning missed. Almost one whole term missed.</i>	<i>Extremely concerning</i>	<i>As above</i>

## Appendix I – Term Time Leave Statement

The intention of this Statement is to provide a coherent, consistent approach across the Trust in managing term time leave and to maximise children's opportunities to achieve.

The Statement sets out clear expectations in relation to:

- procedures for requesting and granting term time leave.
- procedures for sharing with families (and pupils) the details of the policy statement.
- register coding for authorised and unauthorised leave.
- procedures for a child not returning to school after term time leave.

Rationale

### DfE Guidelines

*Can pupils go on holiday in term time?*

No, not unless *exceptional circumstances* are met. Under current regulations, Headteachers *only have* discretion to grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances only in term time. It is the Headteacher's decision as to the number of days authorised.

Parents are not entitled to remove children from school for holidays; leave of absence must be applied for, and the decision to authorise absence for holidays rests entirely with the Headteacher.

Parents must plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

An application for leave of absence should (and from certain schools must) not be granted unless it is made in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with and the school is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstance of the case which justify the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

### Guidance to Parents/Carers

- Take holidays during school holidays.
- Avoid taking a school aged child out of school at times when they should be taking tests.
- Do not expect their child's school to agree to a family holiday during term time.
- Each Trust school will carefully consider their request, but it should always be assumed that leave

will not be authorised.

#### Guidance to Schools:

- If a Trust school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on holiday, absence is unauthorised and will be recorded on the child's records and annual report.
- If parents keep a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is recorded as unauthorised.
- In accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (8), schools may delete from roll a pupil who fails to return within 20 school days, unless there is a good reason for the continued absence such as illness.

#### Legal Position

The legal position is as follows:

1. Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school.
2. In the event of a parent taking their child on an unauthorised holiday, a Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority, leading to a fine. If the parent does not pay, they will be prosecuted, and if found guilty are liable to a larger fine, and possibly a criminal record.

#### Response to Request

- Each Trust school will consider the circumstances on an individual basis according to attendance records, Local Authority and Government guidance.
- The school will inform the parent in writing advising whether the leave has been authorised or unauthorised. It should be made clear the reasons why a decision has been taken and the criteria used should be re-iterated.
- If the school authorises the term time leave, the register code (authorised absence)
- If the school declines the request for term time leave, and the child is absent due to the leave still being taken, the register code 'G' (unauthorised absence) should be used. In this case, normal procedures for non-attendance apply and the school is likely to make a referral to the appropriate officer following agreed procedures.

#### If the child does not return to school on the date agreed after authorised leave

- If another reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer the pupil should be registered appropriately. In all other cases register the absence as unauthorised.
- Normal procedures for non-attendance apply and the school should make a referral to the appropriate officer following agreed procedures.
- The appropriate officer will then inform the school of the outcome of the visit and make recommendations for action.

#### Procedure for sharing this policy with families

- Each Trust school will share with parents and pupils the expectations outlined in this document, by the school yearly letter or attendance statement about leave.
- New intake evenings/meetings and parents' evenings can also be used to share the information.
- Children with attendance below 96% will be monitored carefully and may be referred to the appropriate officer and a comment usually made on the child's report.
- Reference will be made to this policy in the school prospectus.
- Specific reference to attendance will also be made in Home/School Agreements.
- This policy is available on the Trust website.

## Appendix J: Plymouth City Council Absence Request Form (for all Plymouth Schools)

OFFICIAL:SENSITIVE



### S2 ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

#### PART 1: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARENT/CARER

##### Notes to parents/carers

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. Only a Head Teacher can agree to grant leave of absence and **permission must be sought at least 20 school days in advance** and must only be for **exceptional circumstances**. To request leave of absence you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent with whom the child normally lives. If you do not have parental responsibility and/or normally live with the child, you must seek the consent of the parent who does, and that person should complete this form. Schools will only consider requests from that parent.

When deciding whether to allow term time leave, for any reason, the school will only consider:

- The reason for the leave (i.e. whether there are exceptional circumstances)

- The time and duration of the leave
- Whether or not the leave could have been taken during the statutory school holiday periods
- **Learning that will be missed**

**WARNING: UNLESS YOU HAVE RECEIVED WRITTEN CONFIRMATION FROM THE SCHOOL THAT THE ABSENCE WILL BE AUTHORISED, YOU MUST NOT ASSUME THAT IT WILL BE. IF THE HEAD TEACHER REFUSES YOUR REQUEST AND YOUR CHILD IS STILL TAKEN OUT OF SCHOOL, THE ABSENCE WILL BE RECORDED AS AN UNAUTHORISED AND YOU MAY BE LIABLE TO A £80/£160 FINE. FINES ARE ISSUED TO EACH PARENT/CARER FOR EACH CHILD. IF YOU HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED A PENALTY FINE WITHIN A 3-YEAR ROLLING PERIOD, ANY FURTHER PENALTY NOTICES WILL BE CHARGED AT A RATE OF £160 WITH NO OPTION TO PAY A REDUCED RATE OF £80. PLEASE READ THE ADVICE OVERLEAF**

To the Headteacher/Principal of  
School/College .....

I wish to apply for

Name(s) of Child(ren) .....DOB.....School.....

(Include siblings attending other  
Schools)

.....DOB  
.....School.....

to be authorised as being absent from school from ..... to .....  
inclusive

**Reason for request for absence during term time. If this is a holiday request please explain the exceptional circumstances which mean that the holiday cannot be taken during a school holiday:**

Signature of Parent/Carer ..... Date .....

Signature of Parent/Carer ..... Date .....

**PART 2: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD TEACHER/PRINCIPAL**

- ☐ **Authorised** The School/College agrees to your child being absent from school on the specified dates.
- ☐ **Absence dates** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Unauthorised** The School/College does not authorise your request for leave in term time for the following reason(s):

Learning that will be missed		No Exceptional Circumstances	
The time and duration of the leave		Leave could have been taken during school holiday periods	

Signed..... Head Teacher/Principal

Date .....

OFFICIAL:SENSITIVE

**HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME. IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ THE INFORMATION BELOW**

**Warning:** If you take your child on holiday in term time without the prior approval of the school, you may be issued a £80/£160 Penalty Fine. Both parents will be liable for a fine for each child taken on holiday during term time. In relation to education, s576 of the Education Act 1996 states that any person who has the actual day to day care and custody of the child such as a step-parent or partner, for example, is also included in the definition of a parent and will be liable for a fine. if you have already received a penalty fine within a 3-year rolling period, any further penalty notices will be charged at a rate of £160 with no option to pay a reduced rate of £80.

The Facts	The Law
<p>It is important that parents carefully consider the implications of taking their child out of school during term time.</p> <p>Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the course work they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.</p> <p>Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.</p> <p>What you should consider: There are times during a school year when a child may experience particular problems because of term time leave such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closeness to exams or tests (Standard Attainment Tests in Year 2, 6 and 9).</li> <li>• During GCSE, and other examination courses.</li> <li>• During the first year at a new school.</li> <li>• At the beginning of a new school term.</li> </ul> <p>If the school refuses a request for term time leave and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as <b>unauthorised absence</b> and may lead to a <b>£80/£160 fine per parent, for each child</b>.</p> <p>Please contact your child's Headteacher if you wish to discuss your reasons for requesting the absence</p>	<p>The law does not say that parents have an automatic right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time.</p> <p>Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations make it clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.</p> <p><b>From 19th August 2024, changes to legislation have introduced a national threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence that can trigger a penalty notice. There are 2 sessions in each school day.</b></p> <p>In <b>exceptional circumstances</b> a Head Teacher may authorise, in advance, requests for periods of leave. The request for leave must come from a parent with whom the child normally resides.</p> <p>If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and the parent could be liable to a penalty fine or court action in relation to failure to ensure the regular attendance of their child.</p> <p>If the child is away from school for a total of 4 weeks or more, the school may have to take the child off roll unless there is a good reason for the continued absence, such as illness. In these circumstances it is up to the parent to inform the school as once removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.</p> <p><b>Holiday prices, and the fact that the parents have booked a holiday before checking with the school, are not exceptional circumstances.</b></p>
<p><b>Other absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genuine illness</li> <li>• medical / dental appointments (but try to make these after school if possible). If the medical appointment occurs in the morning or afternoon, your child is expected to attend school before or after the appointment.</li> <li>• Days of religious observance</li> <li>• Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement</li> <li>• Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces</li> <li>• External examinations</li> <li>• When the Traveller children go on the road with their parents where the school is informed beforehand</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other absence from school will not be authorised:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For any type of shopping</li> <li>• Looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents</li> <li>• Minding the house</li> <li>• Birthdays</li> <li>• Resting after a late night</li> <li>• Relatives visiting or visiting relatives.</li> <li>• Because holidays are cheaper in term time</li> <li>• More than one day for a family wedding.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The law requires schools to be open to pupils for 190 days each year, and every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time. We hope that when you have read this leaflet you will consider that your child's education is too important to take holidays during term time.</b></p>	

## Appendix K: Torbay Council Absence Request Form (for all Torbay Schools)

### ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

To: *The Principal / Head Teacher of .....*

*I wish to apply to have an absence authorised from (DATES):* *To:* *(inclusive) for the following child(ren)*

Child(ren)'s name(s)	Class/Year

Do you have a child who attends at a different school that will also be absent? If so, please state the child's name and school:

Name of child(ren):	Registered school

If the children will not be with you, but be with another parent/carer during the absence please provide their details:

Name:	
Address:	
Relationship to child	

Please fully explain the **exceptional circumstances** that you would like the school to consider. This section must be completed. Please continue on a separate sheet if needed and attach any supporting documentation you would like the school to consider:

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	

Office use only		<input type="checkbox"/> Absence authorised      Code ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Absence unauthorised  Signed _____ Head Teacher
Date form received	No of days absence requested	

✂-----  
**This portion to be returned to parents/carers**  
 Please note that even if this absence request is authorised you may still receive letters of concern from either the school or Local Authority if your child's attendance drops below a level that the school deems acceptable,  
 Pupil(s) name(s).....  
 Class/Year.....  
☐ Absence authorised      from .....to ..... (Inclusive)  
☐ Absence unauthorised      current attendance ..... % as of ...../...../20.....  
  
 Signed ..... (Head Teacher)      Date.....

**NOTES TO PARENTS/CARERS:** The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission **must** be sought in **advance**. If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, the authorising of the absences will be conditional on the child(ren) attending satisfactorily up to the date covered by this request.

**WARNING TO PARENTS:** If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an

unauthorised absence. A significant amount of unauthorised absence may make you liable for a Penalty Notice for each child, payable by each parent/carer, or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months. Parents should note that in normal circumstances, current practice is that two penalty notices will be issued to a parent relating to the absence of a particular child within a three-year period. Should a further period of unauthorised absence be recorded, then the parent(s) will normally receive a Single Justice Notice Procedure or a summons to appear at a Magistrates Court.

## AVOIDABLE ABSENCE IN TERM-TIME

**IMPORTANT:** Please read carefully the information below.

**WARNING:** If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice\* per parent per child or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 Education Act 1996.

As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.

THE FACTS	THE LAW
<p>Pupils registered at a school are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school is open. Legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school if there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p><b>WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER</b></p> <p>Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.</p> <p>Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.</p> <p>If the school is unable to authorise the absence and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as <b>unauthorised absence</b>, and you may receive a £80* fine per parent for each child.</p>	<p>The law allows schools to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However, before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient information/evidence in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from a parent with whom the child normally resides.</p> <p>If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.</p> <p>If the child is away from school for a total of four weeks or more, the school may have the option to take the child off roll subject to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.</p> <p>In the case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent fully informs the school as to the reasons. If a child is removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.</p>

<p><b>Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Genuine illness</li> <li>▪ Emergency medical / dental appointments</li> <li>▪ Days of religious observance</li> <li>▪ Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces</li> <li>▪ External examinations</li> <li>▪ When Traveller children travel with their parents for the purposes of work where this is agreed by the school</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other examples of absence from school that will not be authorised:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Any type of shopping</li> <li>▪ Looking after siblings or unwell parents</li> <li>▪ Minding the house</li> <li>▪ Birthdays</li> <li>▪ Resting after a late night</li> <li>▪ Relatives visiting or visiting relatives</li> <li>▪ <b><u>The Department for Education states: "Head teachers should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If a head teacher grants a leave request, it will be for the head teacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm."</u></b></li> </ul>
<p><b>The law requires parents to ensure their children receive an efficient full-time education, and every minute of every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time.</b></p> <p>We hope that when you have read this leaflet you will consider that your child's education is too important to allow them to miss school for avoidable reasons.</p>	

\*For the first offence a Penalty Notice will be charged at £80 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £160 if paid between days 22 and 28. If a second

## **Appendix J: Connect Academy Trust Exceptional Circumstances & absence codes**

Headteachers are no longer allowed to authorise absence from school unless it is due to exceptional circumstances. The Absence Request form should be completed by parents/carers when requesting term time absence from school for their child, regardless of whether the absence is for a holiday, or any other reason. All requests for absence should be evidenced based, e.g. medical appointment cards, letters from employers etc. While the Headteacher holds the final decision on absence requests, this guide aims to clarify what may or may not constitute exceptional circumstances. Open communication between parents/carers and the school is crucial in these matters

- A specified, limited period may be granted when a family needs to spend time together because of an immediate family member's bereavement, crisis or serious illness.
- Funeral of immediate family member
- Religious observance (up to 3 days, for the religious observance only)
- Transport was not provided by the LA when it should have been
- Children of service personnel about to go on deployment (permission would be considered as long as the request is accompanied by a letter from the Commanding Officer)
- One day of absence could be authorised for a wedding of an immediate family member and the invitation has been provided as evidence
- One off sporting events/performing arts competitions, if the child is participating and is at county standard or above and a letter has been provided from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence
- One day of absence could be authorised for an immediate family members graduation ceremony/passing out parade
- Medical appointments (parents/carers should be encouraged to arrange non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours when possible. If the medical appointment is during the school day, evidence must be provided. Schools should not authorise a whole day's absence for a medical appointment that occurs in the morning – the child would be expected to return to school in the afternoon, and vice versa.

Absence should not be authorised for reasons such as the following:

- To care for other family members
- Birthdays
- To interpret for other family members
- No school uniform/shoes
- Bullying
- Friendship problems
- Head lice
- Learning difficulties
- Family holiday
- Weddings abroad – regardless of whether it is for immediate family members
- Family Anniversaries
- Death of a pet
- Travel problems
- School refusal

This list provides examples and is not exhaustive.

*(The immediate family is a defined group of relations, used in rules or laws to determine which members of a person's family are affected by those rules. It normally includes a person's parents, spouses, siblings and children. It can contain others connected by birth, adoption, marriage, civil partnership, or cohabitation, such as grandparents, grandchildren, siblings-in-law, half-siblings, adopted children and stepparents/stepchildren, and cohabiting partners)*

### Absence Codes

The session is a morning session and the pupil is present at the school when the attendance register begins to be taken.	/
The session is an afternoon session and the pupil is present at the school when the attendance register begins to be taken.	\
The pupil is absent from the school when the attendance register begins to be taken but attends before the taking of the register has ended.	L
The pupil is late, after the registers have closed	U
The pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	Cl
The pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment.	M
The pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Jl
The pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of studying for a public examination	S
The pupil is not of compulsory school age and is absent with leave because their timetable does not require them to attend.	X
The pupil is of compulsory school age and is absent with leave because, in accordance with an agreement between a parent who they normally live with and the proprietor that the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis, their timetable does not require them to attend.	C2
The pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of attending another school at which they are a registered pupil.	D
The pupil is absent with leave for any other purpose.	C
The pupil is a mobile child, their parent is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with that parent.	T
The day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which a parent of the pupil belongs	R
The pupil is unable to attend because of sickness.	I
The pupil is unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements for them.	Q
The pupil is unable to attend because the school is not within walking distance of the pupil's home and the transport to and from school that is normally provided for the pupil by the proprietor or a local authority is not available.	Y1
The pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency	Y2
Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and the pupil is one of those who the proprietor thinks cannot practicably be accommodated in those parts of the premises that remain in use.	Y3
The pupil is unable to attend because they are in criminal justice detention	Y5
The pupil is unable to attend due to public health guidance or law	Y6
The pupil is excluded from the school for any other reason.	E
The pupil is unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	Y7
The pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday.	G
The circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established.	N

**Appendix L:**  
**Late arrivals, first letter**

Dear

Our records show your child has been late into school on **[NUMBER]** occasions during this **academic year / Term.**

This means that we are now required formally to monitor their punctuality. If your child continues to arrive late for registration, we will write to you again to arrange an appointment to see how we can best support you. There may well be a reason for this lateness that we are unaware of. If that is the case, then please do come and speak to a member of the Attendance Team.

Children may come into school from **8:40am** to prepare for the start of the day. Morning learning commences at **8:45am** and the register is taken at **8:50am**. If your child arrives after **8:50am**, a late mark will be given.

Please be aware that, once the register closes at **9.10am**, the session is marked as an unauthorised absence. Please note that 10 unauthorised absences, within a 6-month period, may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

The start of the school day is important for the children as arriving late means they miss out on their teacher's meet and greet which assists in a smooth transition into school. They may also miss a critical part of the learning for the first lesson and can create disruption for other members of the class, distracting them from their learning.

If there is any way we can support you in this, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you.  
Yours sincerely

Headteacher

**Appendix M:**  
**Ongoing Late arrivals**

Dear

Re: Ongoing Late Arrivals -

I am writing to you again regarding **[NAME's]** punctuality. Your child has been late to school on **[NUMBER]** occasions this academic year. Of these sessions, **[NUMBER]** have been recorded as unauthorised (after registers close at **9.10am**). Please note that 10 unauthorised absences, within a 10-week period, may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

Children may come into school from **8:40am** to prepare for the start of the day. Morning learning commences at **8:45am** and the register is taken at **8:50am**. If your child arrives after **8:50am**, a late mark will be given.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child. We want to make sure that we can support **[NAME's]** education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help them to address gaps in learning due to lateness. The start of the school day is important for the children as arriving late means they miss out on their teacher's meet and greet which assists in a smooth transition into school. They may also miss a critical part of the learning for the first lesson and can create disruption for other members of the class, distracting them from their learning.

There may well be a reason for this lateness that we are unaware of. I believe that it would be helpful for you to have a meeting over the telephone with our **NAME** Attendance Officer, to discuss your child's punctuality and offer any additional support that would be helpful. **Name** will contact you by telephone in the coming days.

We look forward to working with you on this matter.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

