



# **Attendance Policy**

## Attendance Policy

### 1 Statement of Policy

- 1.1 Oakfield School is committed to meeting its obligation with regard to school attendance through a whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:
- Promoting good attendance.
  - Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
  - Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
  - Acting early to address patterns of absence.
  - Building strong relationships with parents/carers to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- 1.2 The school will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons and activities.
- 1.3 The school will meet and respond to its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty, April 2011.

### 2 Legislation & Guidance

- 2.1 This policy meets the requirements of **Working together to improve school attendance, September 2022** from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the **DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures**.
- 2.2 These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:
- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996.
  - Part 3 of The Education Act 2002.
  - Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006.
  - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments).
  - The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.
  - Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance, September 2022.
- 2.3 This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

- 2.4 The DfE's statutory guidance document on attendance states 'parents/carers have a legal duty to make sure that their child aged 5 to 16 if registered at a school, attends that school regularly.'
- 2.5 Year 11 pupils who are 16 years old are of compulsory school age up to the last Friday of June.

### **3 Roles & Responsibilities**

#### **3.1 Governing Body**

3.1.1 The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.
- Making sure the school's SSLT fulfils expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school.
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Holding the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

#### **3.2 Deputy Headteacher**

3.3 The Deputy Headteacher is the designated senior leader responsible for whole school attendance.

3.3.1 Under the guidance of the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Governing Body.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.
- Leading attendance across the school.
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Having oversight of data analysis.
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents/carers to discuss attendance issues.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.

### **3.4 Attendance Team**

3.4.1 The school's Attendance Team is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data every week. (*Please see Section 7 – Attendance Monitoring.*)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement. This includes persistent absences and identifying causes for concern.
- Providing regular attendance reports to staff and reporting concerns about attendance or concerns to the Deputy Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Working with parents/carers, professionals, and education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Liaising with the school's Emotional Wellbeing and Multi-Agency/Safeguarding Teams.
- Liaising and sharing attendance information with staff. This may be done via email or during debriefs/meetings.
- Advising the Deputy Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

### **3.5 Teacher/Tutor**

3.5.1 Teachers and Tutors have the legal responsibility for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information on SIMS by 9:10am during tutor time and 1:05pm during afternoon registration.

3.5.2 Teachers and Tutors (this includes support staff, e.g. Learning Behaviour Support Mentors and the Residential Team) are also responsible for informing the school office of pupils who are not present and the reason.

### **3.6 Administration Team**

3.6.1 The school's Administration Team will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence daily and record them on SIMS.
- Record information given in calls from parents/carers about the nature of the pupils' absences on SIMS. This is to provide the Attendance Team with more detailed support on attendance.
- Provide all staff with weekly attendance data via email.
- Produce daily/weekly summary attendance data for weekly attendance meetings.
- Liaise with staff and the Multi-Agency/Safeguarding Team regarding attendance concerns.

### **3.7 Parents/Carers**

#### **3.7.1 Parents/carers are expected to:**

- Make sure their child attends school every day by 8:50am.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:50am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

### **3.8 Pupils**

#### **3.8.1 Pupils are expected to:**

- Attend school every day on time. The school day starts at 8:50am and finishes at 3:00pm, Monday to Thursday and 2:30pm on Friday.
- Attend every timetabled lesson on time. (*Please see the timings of the school day via the school website*)

## **4 Recording Attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance Registers**

4.1.1 The school will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

4.1.2 The school will take the attendance register at the start of each school day during tutor time and again during afternoon registration. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

4.1.3 Please see Appendix 1 for the DfE Attendance Codes.

4.1.4 The school will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not.
- The activity's nature if a pupil attends an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

4.1.5 The school will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

4.1.6 Pupils should arrive on school site by 8:50am each day.

4.1.7 The register for the morning will be taken from 9:00am and will be kept open until 9:20am The register for the afternoon will be taken from 1:00pm and will be kept open until 1:10pm.

## 4.2 **Unplanned Absence**

4.2.1 The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence **by 8:50am** or as soon as possible by calling the school on 01482 854 588. (*Please see also Section 7 – Attendance Monitoring.*)

4.2.2 The school will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school is genuinely concerned about the authenticity of the illness.

4.2.3 If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or another appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

4.2.4 If the school is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

## 4.3 **Planned Absence**

4.3.1 Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.  
However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

4.3.2 The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.  
Please refer to Section 5 – Authorised & Unauthorised Absence to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## 4.4 **Lateness & Punctuality**

4.4.1 A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (Code L).
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (Code U).

4.4.2 The school will follow the Behaviour & Discipline Policy to implement appropriate sanctions for lateness and punctuality.

#### 4.5 **Following Up on Unexplained Absence**

4.5.1 Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of an unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the pupil's emergency contacts cannot be reached by telephone, the school will also send a text message/email asking for the parent/carer to contact the school as soon as possible.
- When a pupil has a Social Worker, the school will communicate absence concerns and work in partnership to remove barriers to good attendance.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than five working days after the session.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) or other relevant external agencies deemed appropriate.

#### 4.6 **Education Off-Site**

4.6.1 The school is responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils who are educated off-site. Where this is the case, they will have reciprocal arrangements in place with the alternative provider, to provide attendance information. This must be provided daily. All unexplained and unexpected absences will be followed up by the provider and the school's Off-Site Provision Coordinator in a prompt and timely manner.

4.6.2 Pupils may be present at an offsite activity, which has been approved by the school. The appropriate code (Code B) will be used thus showing that the school has certified that the education is supervised, and appropriate measures are in place to safeguard the pupil.

4.6.3 A pupil may be dual registered at more than one school/provider. Where this is the case, the appropriate code (Code D) will be used to

show that the pupil was not expected to attend the school as they were scheduled to attend the school at which they are registered.

#### 4.7 Reporting to Parents/Carers

- 4.7.1 The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels by calls home, home/welfare visits and via End of Term Reports, Annual Review meetings and attendance letters.
- 4.7.2 Please see Appendix 2 – the school's Attendance Procedure.

### 5 Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

#### 5.1 Approval for Term-Time Absence

- 5.1.1 The Deputy Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Deputy Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent.
- 5.1.2 The school defines 'exceptional circumstances' (for leave of absence that is not a holiday) as 'being unique and significant to the child's emotional, educational, or spiritual wellbeing that it outweighs the loss of teaching time'.
- 5.1.3 The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request.
- 5.1.4 Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least **4 weeks** before the absence, and by a leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The Deputy Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for a leave of absence.
- 5.1.5 Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:
- Illness and medical/dental appointments (please see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more details).
  - Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
  - Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, barges



(occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller's family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed to this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

- An immediate member of the family is seriously/terminally ill and there are compassionate grounds for absence.
- The recent death of an immediate family member has been traumatic, and it is felt that, on balance, a child having time away from school would be of emotional benefit.
- Any arrangements for access determined by a Court Order.

## **5.2 Legal Sanctions**

5.2.1 The school or Local Authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

5.2.2 If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

5.2.3 Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher, Local Authority Officer, or the Police.

5.2.4 The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may consider:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

5.2.5 If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## **6 Strategies for Promoting/Supporting Attendance**

6.1 Oakfield School seeks to recognise and celebrate regular attendance.

6.2 The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind pupils and parents/carers of the importance of good attendance.

- The school will issue a yearly attendance letter. This includes term-term holiday information, an academic calendar and various other information on attendance.
- This policy will be made available via the school website. The school's attendance procedure and information will be shared via

the school website and communicated with the pupil and parent/carer during the admission process.

- As part of the curriculum, staff will promote attendance through PSHE lessons and Hub/Tutor times.
- The school will offer various incentives and rewards to promote good attendance. For example, the school will offer pupils Epraise points from 500 up to 5000 and bespoke certificates to recognise their achievements.
- The SENDCo will support attendance through the 6-Week Assessment/Annual Review process.
- The school's Parent and Young Person Liaison Officer will make home/welfare visits to ascertain reasons for poor attendance. This will also be a support network for pupils and parents/carers to engage with the school in removing barriers to attendance concerns.

## **7 Removing Barriers to Attendance – Emotional Wellbeing/Mental Health**

- 7.1 Throughout the school's attendance process, staff will convey clear messages about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing, and wider outcomes.
- 7.2 Staff should be aware that mental health problems could also be a barrier to good attendance. In some cases, it is also a sign that a child has suffered or is experiencing trauma.
- 7.3 The school has a variety of internal and external support networks that they can refer to. The school may also choose to signpost relevant support for both pupils and their parents/carers.
- 7.4 If a member of staff has a mental health or well-being concern about a child, immediate action should be taken, following the school's Child Protection Policy, and speaking with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Emotional Wellbeing Manager.
- 7.5 The school does not condone bullying or harassment by pupils, members of staff or parents/carers. If any form of this behaviour occurs, it will be dealt with as a very serious matter. No one should feel they cannot attend school for fear of being bullied or harassed.
- 7.6 If a child goes missing or is persistently absent from school, this may be an indicator of criminal or sexual exploitation, especially if other key factors are also present. At Oakfield School, we monitor absenteeism daily to ascertain pupils' whereabouts to ensure they are safe from harm. The school will work endlessly with all statutory and non-statutory agencies, including parents/carers to protect any child at risk or possibly risk of this form of abuse.

## 8 Children Missing Education (CME)

### 8.1 Position Statement – national definition of children who are not receiving a suitable education:

*“A compulsory school age child who is not on the roll of a school, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority, and who is not receiving a suitable education at home” (revised statutory guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving a suitable education January 2009).”*

8.2 Local Authority Children Missing from Education protocols are designed to support professionals, partners, and stakeholders in their combined efforts to safeguard children who are missing in education. It aims to identify the practical steps to be taken by professionals to locate and track children and young people missing from education.

8.3 If any pupil is absent without explanation for 10 consecutive days, the school will notify the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Education Welfare Service. The school will include details of the actions taken to ascertain the reason for their absence from school.

8.4 No child will be removed from roll without consultation between the Headteacher and Education Welfare Service, when appropriate.

8.5 **Please refer to the Local Authority CME protocols.**

## 9 Part-time Timetables

9.1 All compulsory-aged children are entitled to a full-time education. Only in an exceptional circumstance would a part-time timetable be granted; this arrangement will be short-term, and should not exceed longer than 6 weeks.

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## 10 Attendance Monitoring

10.1 The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.
- Identify whether there are groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

10.1.1 Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority levels through the DfE's school absence

national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the Governing Body.

10.1.2 The DfE's weekly national attendance statistics for special schools are published on the school's website.

10.1.3 The school would like every child to aim for 100% attendance each term.

10.1.4 The expectation, however, is that during an academic year a child's attendance will be at least above 96%. (Please see the school's attendance percentage thermometer in Appendix 3.)

## **10.2 Analysing Attendance**

10.2.1 The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their parents/carers.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

## **10.3 Using Data to Improve Attendance**

10.3.1 The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to all staff and the SLT, to facilitate discussions with pupils and parents/carers.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies.

## **10.4 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence**

10.4.1 Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

10.4.2 The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils whom the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

10.4.3 Please refer to the school's step-by-step Attendance Procedure in Appendix 2.

## **11 Monitoring & Review**

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Deputy Headteacher. At every review, the Governing Body will approve the policy.

## **12 Other Policies**

- 12.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Absenting Policy
- Alternative Provision Policy
- Behaviour & Discipline Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Emotional Wellbeing Policy
- Equality Policy

## Appendix 1 – DfE Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

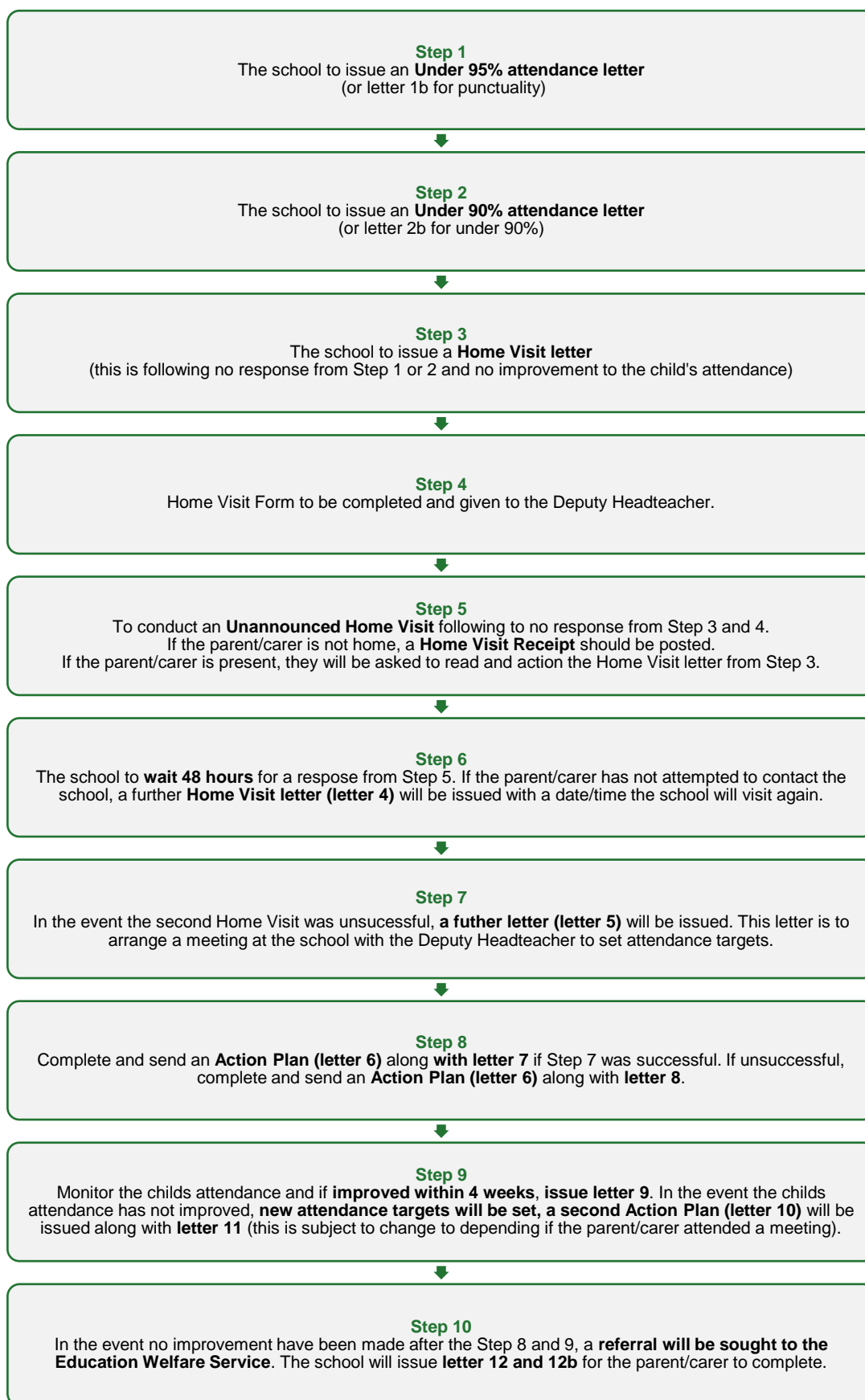
Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	The pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	The pupil is present at the afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	The pupil arrives late before the register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	The pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	The pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	The pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	The pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	The pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	The pupil is on a work experience placement

Authorised Absence		
Code	Definition	Scenario
C	Authorised leave of absence	The pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	The pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	The pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	The school has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	The pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	The pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma, and traveller absence	A pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Unauthorised Absence		
Code	Definition	Scenario
G	Unauthorised holiday	The pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	The pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	The school is not satisfied with the reason for the pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	The school site is closed, there is a disruption to travel because of a local/national emergency, or the pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

## Appendix 2 – Attendance Procedure





### Appendix 3 – Attendance Percentage Thermometer

