



The
Maltby Learning Trust

Attendance and Punctuality Policy (Primary) Covid-19 Update

Date Last Reviewed: August 2020
Reviewed by: Executive Principal
Approved by: CEO

1. INTRODUCTION

Each Academy within the Maltby Learning Trust (MLT) encourages 100% attendance and punctuality for all students. The Trust expects all students to attend regularly and arrive at lessons on time, in order to take full advantage and access the full-time educational opportunities they are entitled to. The expectation is that parent/carers will ensure that their child or young person arrives at the Academy on time every day and support the MLT's policies and procedures regarding attendance and punctuality.

In order to achieve excellent attendance, MLT Academies provide welcoming, safe and secure environments where students feel valued. In addition, each Academy works hard to create a stimulating and accessible curriculum with high quality teaching for every student, together with a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Attendance is inevitably bound up within the ethos of MLT Academies and the networks of relationships that exist within it.

Covid-19 – During periods of Covid-19 restriction, MLT Academies will follow government guidance on expectations for attendance. Our commitment to high levels of attendance remains consistent in all situations, whether the academies are fully open or open to eligible groups of pupils - in these cases, high levels of engagement are expected from those students working from home. Because of lockdown arrangements and flexible provision, attendance may not be compulsory for some periods during Covid-19 restrictions; however, it is always strongly encouraged, and enforcement will be used when guidance allows. This is in line with the ethos of our Academies and the importance we place on motivation for learning.

2. WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS CRITICAL

Any absence affects the pattern of a child or young person's schooling and regular absence equates to significant lost learning time which will seriously affect their learning and progress. Any child or young person's absence also disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring children and young people attend regularly at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Covid-19 – During periods of Covid-19 restriction, attendance of eligible groups is vital for the continuity of education to be maintained. Periods of closure or reduced provision have the potential to be highly disruptive for the progress of students throughout the age range; it is therefore vitally important that students are encouraged to attend school whenever this is possible and fully engage with online learning when it is not. During these periods the Trust will follow government guidance on whether or not to take enforcement action. However, we will always undertake to persuade both students and parents of the importance of high levels of engagement and attendance throughout the period of restriction.

3. ACADEMY RESPONSIBILITY

To encourage excellent attendance, the Academy:

- Ensure all staff understand their role in ensuring good attendance and punctuality, and in reducing absence including Persistent Absence.
- Provide regular attendance monitoring by Attendance Officers in conjunction with Pastoral, Inclusion and Safeguarding Teams, including acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Ensure students with good and rapidly improving attendance and/or punctuality are recognised and rewarded.
- Ensure students with poor attendance and/or punctuality are investigated through Academy referral procedures and challenged through Academy and Local Authority sanctions.

- Ensure parents/carers are supported to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and are punctual in attending at the start of the school day and in secondary academies, at the start of each lesson.
- Ensure students and their parent/carers are made aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality and are informed of the consequences when it is not. Give parents/carers details on attendance on the website (and the Academy app).
- Report to parents/carers regularly on how their child is performing in the Academy, what their attendance and punctuality rates are and how these relate to their attainment and progress and Academy target.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through year group, house, class competitions, certificates and commendations.
- Run promotional events when parents/carers, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the Academy.

4. PARENTS/CARERS' RESPONSIBILITY:

To encourage excellent attendance, parents/carers:

- Have a legal duty to send their children to school regularly and risk prosecution if they fail in this duty. Only the Academy, within the context of the law, can approve absence.
- Cannot approve absence.
- Will be informed when their child's attendance is unauthorised.
- Should attempt to arrange appointments for their child or young person outside normal Academy hours whenever possible. Wherever possible the student will be expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment.
- **Covid-19** – The MLT follows government guidance during periods of Covid-19 restriction, and at times the above legal framework will be applied in line with this guidance.
- **Covid-19** – The MLT acknowledges that raised anxieties during Covid-19 restrictions may be a barrier to attendance. However, there remains an overriding legal duty on parents to ensure their child receives an education and therefore attendance will be always be strongly encouraged and enforced where possible.

5. STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITY:

To encourage excellent attendance, students:

- Must ensure that they arrive promptly, attend all morning and afternoon sessions and timetabled lessons punctually.
- Must sign out at Student Reception and obtain an 'Authorised Absence' Slip, which gives proof of their authorisation to be off-site.
- May not leave the Academy premises during lunchtime. Note extensive 'Active Lunchtime' provision and a number of healthy eating outlets are provided.
- Must sign in and out of the premises via the central entry/exit system (Sixth Form Only).
- **Covid-19** – Must engage with learning in whatever form this might take during periods of restricted access to Academy sites.

NB. Permission to leave the site will normally only be given for fixed term exclusion, or authorised medical/dental appointments.

6. ATTENDANCE TEAM RESPONSIBILITY:

To encourage excellent attendance, the attendance team:

- Carefully monitor the attendance and punctuality of all students.
- Identify any attendance problems and students who are at risk of persistent absence
- Liaise closely with pastoral, inclusion and/or safeguarding staff as well as the Principal to support attendance and punctuality initiatives.
- Ensure class teachers and/or form tutors liaise proactively with the Team to help identify and address attendance issues.
- Take relevant action where attendance is a cause for concern e.g. telephone parents/carers to discuss the problem, make home visits, organise meetings with parents/carers to decide on the appropriate intervention.
- Pursue enforcement action where no significant improvement has been made to attendance, as required by the 'Attendance Matters Pathway for Schools' (appendix 1). This is the process agreed by the Local Authority and all Rotherham schools to address irregular or non-school attendance.
- On discovering truancy, will inform the student's parents/carers and Tutor the same day and appropriate sanctions applied.
- **Covid-19** – Work to ensure students and parents are reassured about the control measures in place within the Academy to ensure health and safety, therefore maximise attendance.
- **Covid-19** – Work to ensure that the maximum number of students eligible to receive face to face teaching attend school.
- **Covid-19** – Work to ensure that any student undertaking remote learning who has been inactive for more than 3 days is contacted.
- **Covid-19** – Work to ensure that the maximum number of students working remotely engage with learning regularly
- **Covid-19** – Work with the Local Authority to undertake enforcement action when guidance allows this and students fail to attend.

7. TEACHING STAFF

To encourage excellent attendance, teaching staff:

- Monitor class attendance and report any cause for concern to the Attendance Officer, SLT staff member or the Principal.
- Have frequent discussion with students about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- Support students who have been absent in making up missed work.
- **Covid-19** – Regularly contact students undertaking learning remotely to ensure engagement remains high

NB. Subject teachers in secondary Academies will follow up suspicious absences by informing the Tutor and Pastoral Teams of any discrepancies immediately. They query persistent or frequent absences with the Tutor to ensure that it is not 'selective truancy'.

8. REGISTERS

Registers are completed using the Academy's SIMS information system (a paper copy is always available should the SIMS system not be operable).

Registers are legal documents and must be taken clearly and accurately, using the correct symbols/codes. (see Appendix 1). All Academies are required by law to keep an attendance register and no gaps in registration can be left. The attendance register must be taken at the start of the first session of each school day (morning) and once during the second session (afternoon) of the school day to mark whether every student is:

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

Any amendments made to the register will include both the original and amended entry, reason and date of amendment and staff member making the amendment.

Registers must be taken within the first 10 minutes of each registration session (and at the start of each lesson in Secondary Academies). Failure to do so will result in a formal reminder and potentially a disciplinary. The Attendance Team will check that teaching staff are completing registers promptly and accurately.

No student may take a register.

Covid-19 – During periods of Covid-19 restrictions, DfE guidance on the completion of registers and subsequent reporting will be followed. Where the Academy is partially open, a record will be kept on site of students who are expected to attend on any given day and who has attended. Any student who is expected and does not attend will be contacted and the reason for non-attendance recorded. Wherever possible, the fully SIMs based registration system will be implemented.

9. COVID-19 – ONLINE ACTIVITY LOG

During periods of Covid-19 restriction, where students are undertaking remote learning out of the Academy, an online activity log of students who have not accessed learning for periods of 3 or more days will be submitted to attendance officers by teachers every week. This will enable well-being checks to take place and work undertaken to engage students and families with learning where required. Actions taken will be logged through school systems such as CPOMS.

10. ILLNESS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

If a student becomes genuinely unwell during the day, they will be sent to Reception by the class teacher (Primary Academies) or by their Teacher/Pastoral Manager (Secondary Academies). Students should not contact parents/carers directly.

Staff will then assess the illness and make decisions about whether parents/carers need to be informed and whether a student will be sent home, wait and/or return to class.

No student should leave the Academy premises for such arising medical reasons without staff permission (based on whether contact has been made with a parent/carer at home).

In the event of a student being genuinely unwell and unable to continue with the Academy day, contact will be made with parent/carer. In the interest of safeguarding students' arrangements will be made for the student to be collected by parent/carer or other nominated family member.

Appropriate First Aid will be administered where deemed necessary by a trained First Aider.

Covid-19 – During periods of Covid-19 restriction, students displaying Covid-19 symptoms (high temperature, persistent cough, loss of taste/smell) should be sent home immediately. These students should be asked to wait in the Academy's designated area (see individual Academy Covid-19 response plan) and only attended by staff equipped with the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) until collected by a responsible adult. Full guidance can be found in the MLT First Aid Policy.

11. ABSENCE PROCEDURE

On the first day of a student's absence, parents/carers should contact the Academy to report the absence. This should be done by a telephone call to reception and at the earliest opportunity (by 8.30am), giving a reason for the absence and a date when the child or young person is expected to return. Parents/carers should contact the Academy on each subsequent day of absence.

Where an acceptable reason for absence is given and accepted by the Academy, the absence may be marked 'authorised'. The Academy is under no obligation to accept the reason given for absence if there is doubt of its validity and may ask for a signed letter to explain the absence.

Where appropriate, parents/carers regularly identifying poor health as a reason for their child or young person's absence will be asked to provide medical confirmation from their GP. If a student is considered 'Persistently Absent', no absence will be granted without medical confirmation from the health professional.

If the absence involves physical injury, with implications upon the student's return to the Academy, a risk assessment will be carried out by the SENDCO for each specific case.

Covid-19 – During periods of Covid-19 restriction, absence procedures will be applied as normal for students eligible to be in the Academy. For students not eligible to be in the Academy the government guidance will be followed.

12. UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

The Academy day consists of two sessions, am and pm.

Every full or half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either 'AUTHORISED' or 'UNAUTHORISED'. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised Absence(s) are mornings or afternoons away from school for a legitimate reason such as:

- Illness
- Medical/Dental appointments (which cannot be made outside of school hours)
- Emergencies or other unavoidable causes
- Religious observance
- Family funeral
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes

Unauthorised Absence(s) are those which legislation does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to legal proceedings and prosecution. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children or young people off school for no reason
- Truancy during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at school too late to get a mark in the register
- Shopping
- Looking after other children
- Birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Excessive, prolonged or repeated patterns for absence due to illness without medical evidence/ confirmation from a GP or other healthcare professional
- Waiting for a delivery

- Taking or collecting a relative to/from the airport
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Parent/carer's illness

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) - A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance falls to 90% or below for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child or young person's educational prospects and the fullest support and co-operation is needed from parent/carers to tackle this.

Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority; parents/carers will be informed of this immediately and remedial action will be taken.

Covid-19 – During periods of Covid-19 restriction when students are not eligible to be in school, the above categories may not be applied. However, monitoring of students' engagement with learning will still take place. Where the academy is fully open, all systems will be fully applied.

13. PUNCTUALITY PROCEDURE

Students arriving after registration time will receive a late mark (L) in the register. If a student is going to be late, parents/carers have a responsibility to inform the Academy of their child's lateness by telephone.

Registers close at 9am (Primary Academies) and 9.15am (Secondary Academies). Students arriving after this time must report to reception and/or student reception to be marked present and order lunch (Primary Academies)

A text message will be sent to parents/carers before 10am indicating lateness or absence if no contact has been made by parent/carers to explain this.

Avoidable and persistent lateness in Secondary Academies will result in a detention.

Ultimately, the parent/carer of a child or young person who frequently arrives late at school can be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court under the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure their child attends regularly.

Covid-19 – During periods of Covid-19 restriction, the above procedures may be adjusted to meet the requirements of the academy's Covid-19 plan and government guidance. Where staggered entry times are used, registers will close 15 minutes after a student's designated start time. Other lateness procedures will be applied on this basis.

14. SUPPORTING AND ENCOURAGING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Whilst any child or young person may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the Academy, the parents/carers and the child or young person. If a child or young person is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. Condoning absence, particularly at an early age, can lead to habitual patterns of non-attendance and can give students the impression that attendance does not matter. Parents/carers can support students by:

- Ensuring regular routines and early bed times
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly to the school
- Retaining open and honest communication with the child or young person's school

- Being positive about school (even if a parent/carers own experience was less than positive)

15. COVID-19 SUPPORTING AND ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT

During periods of remote learning, it may be challenging to keep students motivated and engaged with learning. Engagement will be monitored through the Online Activity Log and contact made with any students who have dropped in engagement and their families. In these cases, issues surrounding the loss of engagement should be sensitively investigated in order to ascertain any barriers. These could be:

- Lack of ICT provision in the home
- Lack of parental supervision due to parent's own job
- Lack of student motivation
- Lack of parental motivation/parental anxiety
- Student resistance to engagement

Attendance officers and other relevant staff should work in partnership with families to overcome any difficulties and barriers to engagement being faced. This could include:

- Provision of physical learning materials (eg. paper packs)
- Provision of remote pastoral support
- More regular teacher contact with student

For disengaged vulnerable students who are eligible to attend school throughout a period of Covid-19 restriction, the school should work proactively to ensure the students attend whenever possible.

Some students and parents may experience anxiety on return to school following a period of closure. While these families should be fully supported and the full range of services accessed, this should be with the intention of children returning to receiving education in the normal classroom environment as rapidly as possible. Parents removing children for extended periods will not be supported to educate at home, other than as part of a carefully structured, time-limited reintegration plan. Prolonged failure for a parent to engage with school on reintegrating their child may be treated as a safeguarding issue and lead to enforcement action being taken to address prolonged poor attendance.

16. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The MLT or Academy Principals are no longer able to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time. The Principal may not grant any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any student absent during term time, unless granted by the Principal because of exceptional circumstances, will be recorded as 'unauthorised' absence.

All requests for leave of absence should be in writing to the Principal and will be considered on an individual basis taking into account individual circumstances. The request for leave of absence form can be obtained from reception/student reception and must be returned to the Academy Attendance Team at least one month in advance of the absence.

A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority where 'a student has been taken on holiday during term time, the absence has not been authorised by the school, and the child's attendance is below the Local Authority average for the previous school year or 3 terms.'

The penalty is £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days of receiving a notice and £120 if paid after this but within 28 days.

17. STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Good attendance is rewarded through a range of initiatives across MLT Academies including competitions, prizes, assemblies, public displays, on the website, letters home and in newsletters. This also ensures that attendance maintains a high profile amongst staff and students.

18. ANALYSING AND REPORTING ATTENDANCE DATA

The Attendance Team review attendance on a daily basis and monitor this continually, producing reports every half term. These reports compare attendance data with the national average and are shared with Academy Governors and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases.

All teachers should look out for any patterns in absence and investigate or report their concerns to the Attendance Team and/or Pastoral teams as appropriate. If a student's attendance level drops below 95% the cause will be investigated by the Academy Attendance Team who will liaise with parents/carers.

As well as liaising with parents/carers, the Attendance Team reports concerns about attendance to the Principal; and advises when fixed penalty notices should be issued. The Principal is responsible for ensuring the Attendance policy is implemented consistently across the school and reporting to the Local Governance Committee (LGC). The LGC are responsible for monitoring attendance data for the Academy on at least a termly basis.

Covid-19 – Where Covid-19 restrictions are in place, attendance analysis will focus on identifying patterns and trends in online/remote learning engagement and attendance for pupils eligible for school provision. This information will be reported to LGCs through the reporting mechanisms outlined above.

19. MONITORING ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY AT OFF SITE PROVISION

Where students attend external provision, weekly registration certificates are received from the external providers. These are monitored and any concerns reported to the Attendance Team/SLT.

20. FIXED TERM PENALTY NOTICE AND/OR PROSECUTION

Reducing unauthorised absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a student's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Truancing can also leave a student vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child or young person fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (absences without a valid reason). Parents/carers are legally responsible for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually. This applies even if children are missing school without the knowledge of their parent/carer.

In line with the Local Authority 'Attendance Matters Pathway for Schools' (appendix 1), parents/carers can be prosecuted, fined up to £2,500 and/or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child or young person attends school regularly and punctually. Alternatively, the

Local Authority may supervise a family for at least a year or until attendance improves to a satisfactory level, under the terms of an Education Supervision Order.

Covid-19 – MLT follows government guidance on enforcement during periods of Covid-19 restriction and as such the above measures may periodically not apply. However, regular communication will take place with families of students not attending provision in order to strongly encourage attendance.

21. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures and refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census which explains the Persistent Absence threshold. These are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

The Education Act 1996

The Education Act 2002

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Appendix One: Attendance Codes

The following codes are used for recording absence and attendance in Academies; these codes are set out in the Department for Education's guidance on school attendance.

Attendance codes

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

Absence codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made

H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their GCSEs
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when reason emerges)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

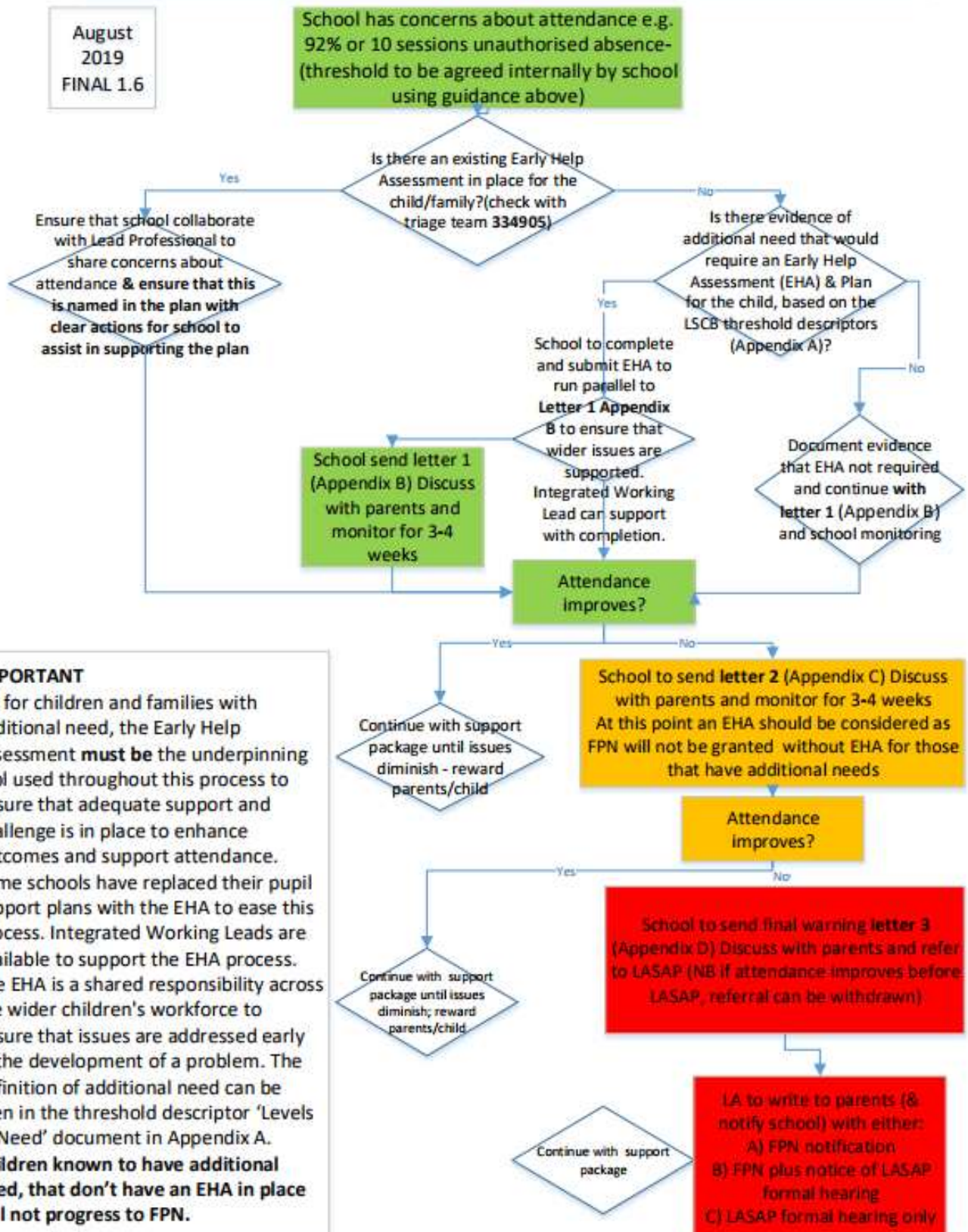
Administrative codes

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

Appendix Two – Local Authority Pathway for Schools

Rotherham Early Help 'Attendance Matters' Local Authority Pathway for Schools Part 1 of 2

August
2019
FINAL 1.6



PART 2

Early Help & Family Engagement Service

School Attendance Matters Pathway Guidance for Schools (Part 2 of 2 to be used in conjunction with Part 1 pathway visual)



This guidance document is **part 2 of 2** and accompanies **Part 1 Attendance Matters Local Authority Pathway for Schools**. This guidance is intended to assist schools in implementing the pathway effectively in order to support enhanced school attendance and to trigger enforcement when all strategies have been tried and exhausted.

1. The Local Authority has offered guidance in relation to thresholds for poor attendance of 92% or ten sessions of unauthorised absence. The Local Authority has based this on concerns about attendance approaching persistent absence which is 90%. It is important, however, that schools are aware that they are free to apply their own threshold (within reason) and 92% is not an imposed level. The school must however ensure that the School Attendance Policy makes the school target clear to parents/carers when a child secures a school place.
2. If a child's attendance falls below the threshold set by school; the school should inform parents and take action.
3. The initial step in this process is to have a conversation with child/parents/carers.
4. If the action taken by the school does not have the desired effect; the school should check whether there is a current existing Early Help Assessment in place for the child and family. School can do this in one of the following ways:
 - Ask the School's named Early Help Link Workerⁱ to check the system
 - Ask one of the two Attendance Lead's to check the system
lisa.marriott@rotherham.gov.uk Kathryn.wiltshire@rotherham.gov.uk
 - Calling the Early Help Triage Team on 01709 334905
5. If there is an existing Early Help Assessment in place; the school should make contact with the Lead Professional to share concerns about attendance and ensure that this is named in the plan with clear actions for school to assist in supporting the plan.
6. Liaising with the Lead Professional and contributing to the existing plan is important as there may be other concerns held (not necessarily related to the child in your school) and it is vital that as professionals we 'join the dots' to ensure that communication is robust. Many Serious Case Reviews cite lack of professional collaboration as a contributory factor to serious concerns about children.
7. If there is not an Early Help Assessment in place; it is important, given the concerns about attendance, that school complete the assessment for children where there is evidence of additional needⁱⁱ. This is vital in order to understand fully the issues that may be affecting attendance and where required, bring in appropriate agencies to support the child and family.
8. The Early Help Integrated Working Lead is available to support schools in completing the Early Help Assessment. See below for the IWL for your locality area:
 - Amanda Millington- NORTH amanda.millington@rotherham.gov.uk
 - Sam Blyth and Beverly Garbett- SOUTH samantha.blyth@rotherham.gov.uk
beverly.garbett@rotherham.gov.uk

- Louise Depledge - CENTRAL louise.depledge@rotherham.gov.uk
 - Rachel Fletcher- Borough Wide rachel.fletcher@rotherham.gov.uk
9. If the family are resistant to having an Early Help Assessment, it is important to reassure them that the process is in place to ensure that the right support is offered to them. Families can often be fearful of interventions such as the Early Help Assessment and reassurance is key to this in order to help the family understand that the process is not an enforcement action but a way of understanding needs and getting the right support.
 10. If, after reassurance and persistence, the family are still unwilling to engage; then school should continue with the 'Attendance Matters Pathway' and enforcement action can then be considered. NB all stages of the pathway must be undertaken (stages 1-3). It is important in the instance of non-engagement that the school records all evidenceⁱⁱⁱ related to attempts to support the family, as this will be required later should enforcement action be pursued. Lack of evidence (recorded in a timely fashion, as attempts to engage are made) will result in a rejection of the FPN or other enforcement. The Early Help Attendance Leads are available to discuss cases and give advice should this be required.
 11. The Attendance Matters Pathway contains a series of three letters, sent at different junctures by schools with set timeframes in between. It is important to send the letters in the sequence described in the pathway. This is essential to ensure consistent approaches across Rotherham and equitable processes are implemented for families.
 12. Letter 1 is the first in the series. This has been designed to support school in sharing the concerns with parents and emphasise the need for improved attendance as well as offering support. If attendance shows an improvement after letter 1, no further letters should be sent.
 13. Letter 2 is the second in the series and should be used when support has been offered and/or taken-up, but attendance has nevertheless not shown improvement. NB Before sending letter 2, a 3-4 week gap should be given to allow for an improvement to take place. Documented evidence of when letters were sent, should be recorded, as this will be required if the case later progresses to enforcement.
 14. Letter 3 should be sent if there is still no improvement in attendance and at this stage, the letter makes clear to parents/carers that they are highly likely to be subject to enforcement action. NB if attendance improves between letter 3 and the LASAP school may wish to either a) withdraw the referral or b) this will be taken into account at LASAP.
 15. At the letter 3 stage school should also complete and submit a referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Panel^{iv}. (LASAP) The LASAP is Rotherham's multi-disciplinary decision making forum that oversees enforcement action under the provision of the Education Act (1996) with regards to parental responsibility for regular school attendance. The Chair of this group is the Early Help Head of Service and a range of agencies attend regularly. When schools have a case being heard at LASAP they will be invited, as will parents and the child where appropriate.
 16. Following referral to LASAP there will be one of three outcomes as follows:
 - FPN issued
 - FPN and decision to hear formal at a future LASAP
 - Decision to hear formally at next LASAP
 - Referral rejected and school notified of reasons

17. We are familiar with families that improve attendance whilst progressing through the pathway, however at a later date, attendance again deteriorates. This can be extremely difficult for schools to manage and repeating past processes can be frustrating and is not in the best interests of the child. Schools should therefore be aware that if there has been less than a twelve week period between the initial improvement and subsequent deterioration, and this can be evidenced, schools do not need to start from the beginning of the pathway; but can start from the place where they last were (i.e. re-join the pathway where they left off.)

i

See Early Help Link Worker for Schools Document (2019) ii

See Rotherham Safeguarding Board Levels of Need document iii

E.G. evidence of letters; home visits; minutes of meetings; pastoral support documentation; school level support offered etc. iv *See 2019 LASAP Referral process and note **all other versions should be deleted.***