Attendance and Punctuality Policy

The governors and staff at Water Orton Primary School are united in their belief that regular school attendance and punctuality is a pre-requisite to good education and securing it is therefore a high priority. Parents will be informed of their responsibilities with regard to ensuring their children's attendance at school in the school prospectus and at intervals throughout the year.

Objectives

- to ensure that parents and pupils understand the importance of good attendance and understand their responsibilities
- to outline the responsibilities of the school, Governors and Local Authority
- to encourage regular attendance and punctuality
- to accurately record and monitor attendance and punctuality.
- to apply a 3 stage strategy to promote regular attendance and minimise lates.
- to acknowledge a successful record of attendance
- to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school
- to work closely with partner agencies to promote regular attendance and punctuality.

Here at Water Orton Primary we aim for all children to be in school every day that they are fit and well to do so.
Pupils are more likely to succeed in their learning when they attend regularly and on time at the start of each school day.

The Importance of School Attendance

School attendance plays a pivotal role in shaping academic success, personal growth, and future prospects, making it a vital aspect of any educational system. Regular attendance to school can have a significant impact on:

- *Academic Achievement:* Regular attendance directly correlates with academic success. Children who attend school consistently are more likely to keep up with the curriculum, perform better in exams, and improve their life outcomes.
- *Knowledge Acquisition:* School is where children acquire knowledge and skills that are crucial for their personal and professional growth. Missing days means missing out on valuable learning opportunities.
- *Social Development:* School provides a vital social environment for children and adolescents to interact with peers, develop friendships, and learn essential social skills. Consistent attendance ensures children remain connected to their peer group.
- *Building Routine:* School attendance establishes a structured routine in children's lives, teaching them time management and responsibility, which are valuable life skills.
- *Teacher Interaction:* Regular attendance allows for meaningful teacher-child interactions. Teachers can provide personalised support, address questions, and assess individual progress more effectively when children attend regularly.
- *Preventing Knowledge Gaps:* Frequent absences can lead to significant knowledge gaps, making it challenging for children to catch up with missed lessons, potentially resulting in long-term academic struggles.
- *School Engagement:* Children who attend school regularly are more likely to engage in extracurricular activities, sports, and other enriching experiences that contribute to their overall development.
- *Legal and Parental Responsibility:* Parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular school attendance. Failing to do so can lead to legal consequences.
- *Community Well-being:* High levels of school attendance contribute to the overall well-being of communities.

Statutory Duty of Schools

All schools have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community.

The most effective schools consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at school, set high expectations for every pupil, communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents, systematically analyse their data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts, and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. They also recognise that attendance cannot be seen in isolation and that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils want to attend and can learn and thrive. To manage and improve attendance effectively, all schools are expected to:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.

- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

In accordance with the regulations relating to pupils' attendance at school, Water Orton Primary School keeps an attendance register and at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. SIMS Attendance electronic system is used for this purpose. An entry must be made on the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age and who are on the school's admission roll.

Parental Involvement - The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Daily expectations at Water Orton Primary

All pupils are expected to attend every day unless they are unwell or if other exceptional circumstances occur.

Absence

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school by 9:15am on the first day of their child's absence. If by 9:15am on the first day of a child's absence the school has not been notified the Attendance Officer will contact the child's parent/carer.

If no reason for absence can be confirmed the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Punctuality

For children, the day starts at 8.45am. All pupils arriving 10 minutes after the start of each session will be coded as authorised late (L code). The registers are collected and sent to the school's office. Similarly, in the afternoon, after taking the register at 1pm the teacher sends it electronically to the school office. At each registration session any child not present is marked as absent.

If the child subsequently arrives after 9.30 a.m. the child is marked as unauthorised late (U code) unless a valid reason is supplied.

Categories of Absence

Where school staff have concerns about a child, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated.

It is imperative that up-to-date contact numbers and details are provided to school. Schools are required to hold more than one emergency contact per child (KCSIE) Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides.

There are two categories of absence:

(i) Authorised (approved)
(ii) Unauthorised (not approved)

Only the Headteacher can approve absence.

(i) **Authorised Absence** An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent. For example, if the child has been unwell and the parent e mails or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

(ii) **Unauthorised Absence** An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

When completing the weekly absence report forms, teachers will record the relevant category of absence. Where the teacher is unsure of the category of absence the Headteacher will decide on the evidence provided. Their decision will be made after referring to guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE).

Persistent Absence

Persistent absence (PA) is used to identify pupils who are absent regularly. A pupil is identified as PA once they miss 10% of their own individual sessions, this will mean all pupils below 90% attendance will be identified as PA. This means that a child missed 19 or more school days in a year.

A pupil can be classed as PA regardless if the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence and persistent absence is reported each year from the October Census.

Attendance, Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

A child missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School should follow the Local Authority's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

All schools are required to make the local authority aware of every registered pupil who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 10 school days education.

Schools are permitted to remove compulsory-school-aged children from roll on the limited grounds, but including some circumstances where pupils are missing from education.

Removing a child from the school roll is a very important decision. Children who fall out of the education system are likely to have poor outcomes and may be exposed to increased risk of harm. The school will follow the most up to date procedures to ensure that they do not breach their legal and safeguarding duties.

Monitoring Attendance

Attendance is monitored by Mrs Bishop, a member of the administration staff.

Parents will be regularly informed of their child's rates of attendance. As a matter of routine this will be in parent's evenings and in annual reports.

The Headteacher is notified by the admin assistant when issues are present. The attendance registers are processed every Friday afternoon by the SIMS administrative assistant.

The administrative assistant will present the Headteacher with weekly percentage attendance values for each class and for the school as a whole. At the end of each week a list of all children who have an unauthorised absence recorded will be produced. Letters will be sent to parents requesting explanations for unexplained absences.

The school will apply a 3-stage strategy to manage absences and lates:

Initial Concerns will be flagged where patterns of emerging concerns are identified for an attendance or punctuality, contact will be made with parents to discuss. This is usually carried out at Parents Evening meetings.

Stage 1 An absence of 5 or more days in the school year so far. Head teacher/designated member of staff will write to all parents where attendance is causing concern. This is an opportunity for parents or guardians to speak to school and where needed support can be offered. We may also consider referring to school nursing service or asking parents to seek medical advice.

Stage 2 An absence of more than 10 days in the school year so far. If attendance does not improve a second letter will be sent to parents or guardians and the Headteacher will discuss the matter in the form of a meeting or telephone conversation. This letter will advise the child's current attendance and will request that medical evidence is provided for all future absences. School will seek advice from Attendance Support Officers to discuss if a family may benefit from their intervention sooner. This will be decided on an individual basis.

Stage 3 Attendance below 90% or 19 school days missed in the school year so far (Known as Persistent Absence or PA) School **may** make a referral to the Attendance Support officers who may arrange to meet with parents to make an assessment of the current situation.

The school may also make a referral to Warwickshire Attendance Service if a child's attendance causes concern. The Warwickshire Attendance Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices in line with the Warwickshire County Council's Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance).
The school will continue to work with families to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistent non-attenders.

Record Keeping:
The school will maintain a record of steps taken to meet the child's needs. This will inform each stage of the process and may form part of legal evidence on behalf of the Local Authority. Notes, records of telephone calls and medical certificates should be dated, named and initialled by the Class Teacher.

Monitoring Lateness

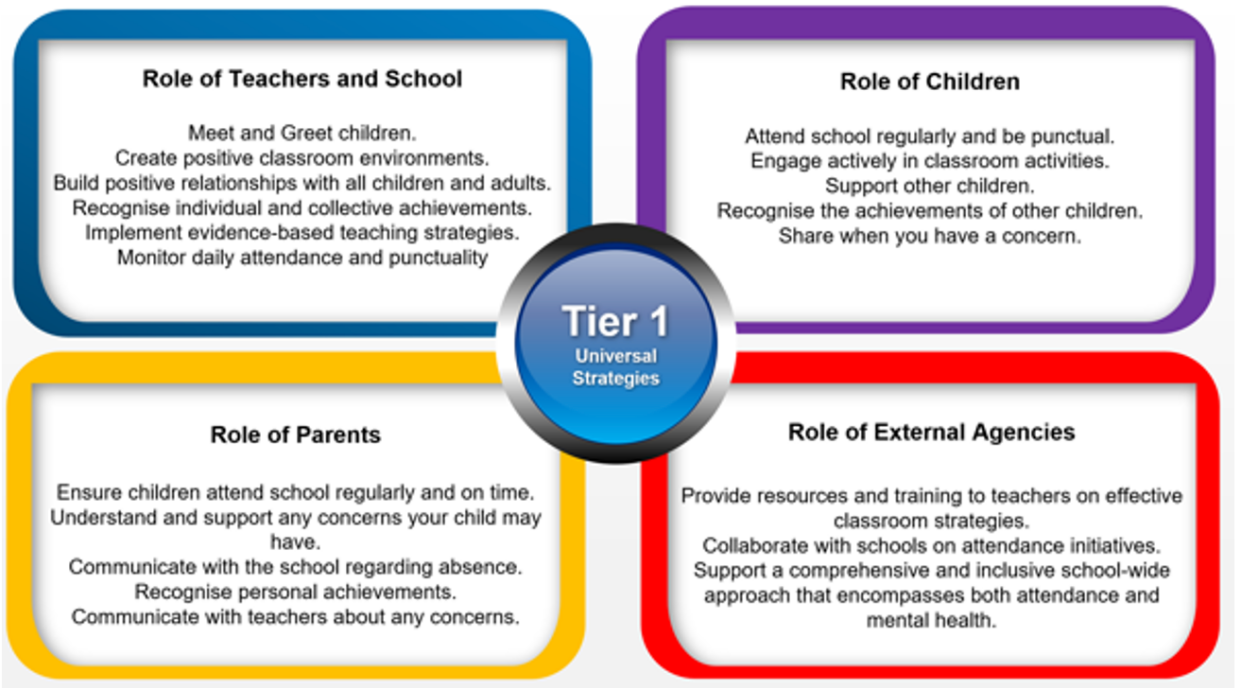
A school letter is sent to parents if their child is regularly late for school. It is normal procedure for the Headteacher or other senior staff to discuss the issue with the parents and advise on how to resolve the issue.

School Support for Good Attendance

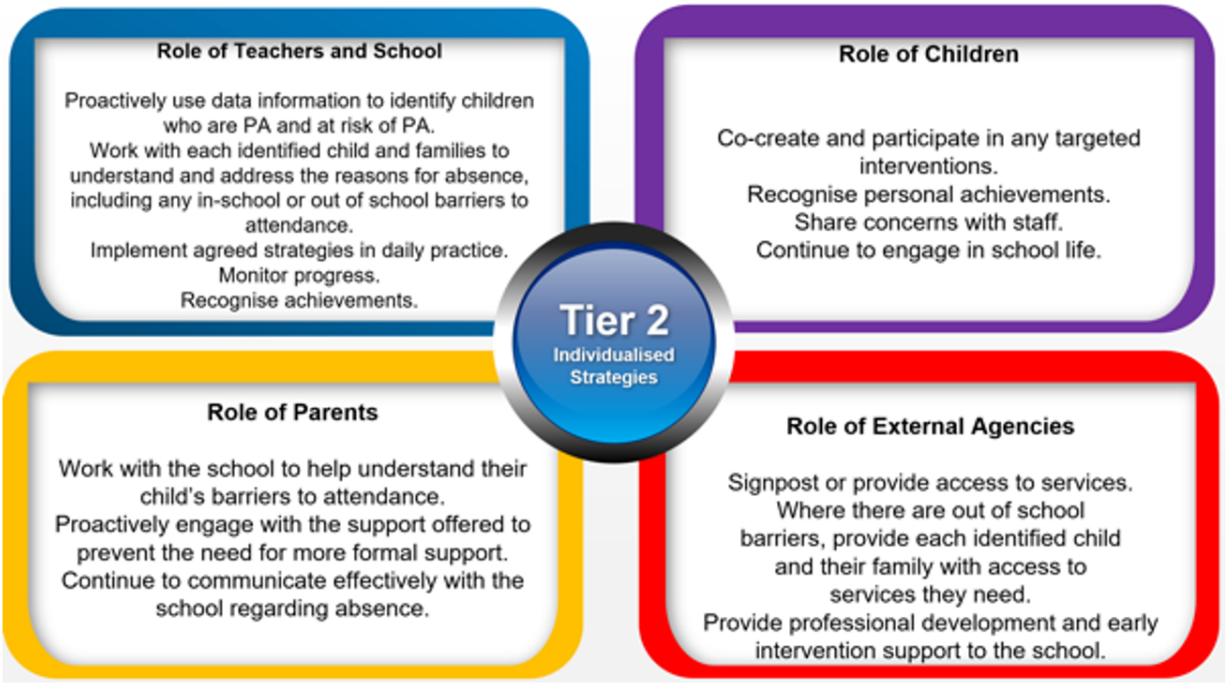
The school, parents, pupils and external agencies all have a role to play in ensuing good school attendance for all.

The school implements a three-tier approach to ensure that all groups are supported.

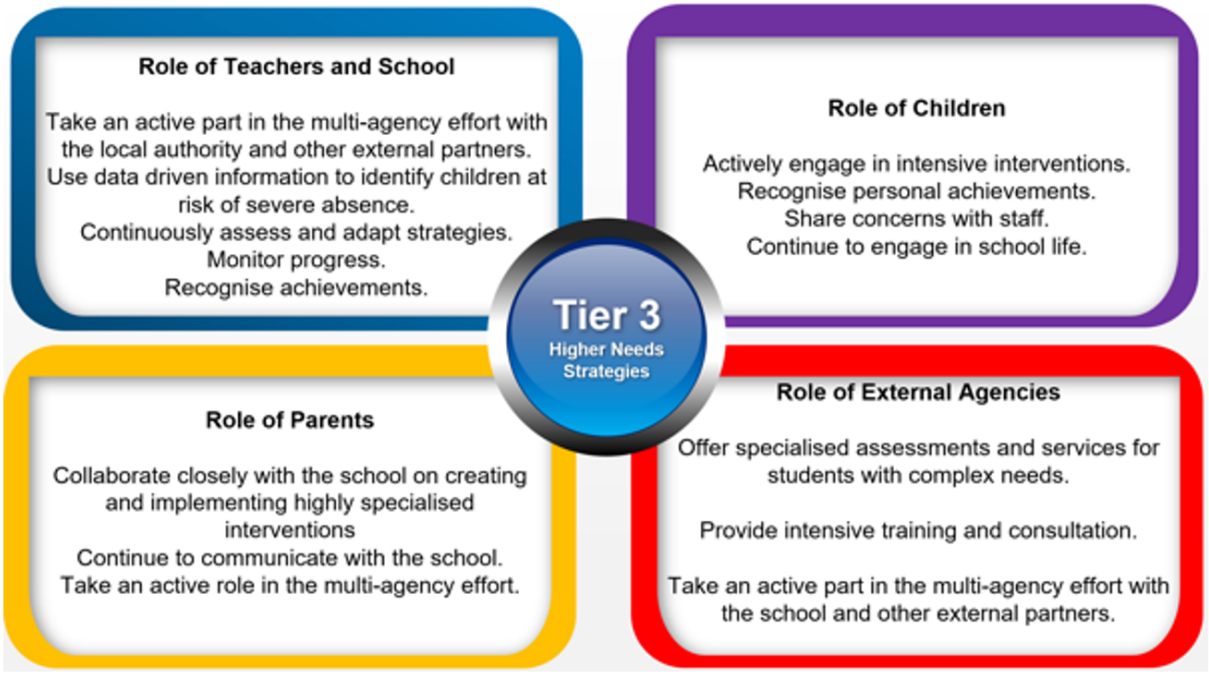
Tier 1 - Universal Approach: Establishing a baseline universal attendance approach that benefits all children.



Tier 2 – Internal individualised Strategies and Early Help Support: Tailoring strategies to individual needs and providing early help support for persistent attendance challenges.



Tier 3 - Higher Needs Strategies Support: Furnishing specialised support for children, young people, and families with complex attendance requirements, including access to external agency support when necessary.



Local Authority Responsibility

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/guardian is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at schools, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to

attend can be prosecuted under Education Act 1996, section 444 1A (as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000).

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced new powers in relation to issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27 February 2004. Penalty notices must be issued in a manner which conforms to all requirements of the Human Rights Act and all relevant Equal Opportunities Legislation. To this aim each Local Authority has a Code of Conduct in relation to issuing Penalty Notices.

Reintegrating after long term absence:

Absence can significantly interrupt the continuity of pupils learning, and positive strategies can be employed to minimise such effects.

This includes:

- Keeping in touch with pupil and family during a long absence.
- The duty to check that a child is at home and is safe.
- The school learning mentor or TA may support reintegration.
- The class teacher should let the pupil know that it is ok to talk to them if they experience any difficulties.
- The class teacher/TA will support the pupil in their return to class and help them with any work they may have missed.

Expectations of governing bodies of maintained schools

Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge. We therefore governing bodies are expected to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

Staff training on attendance

Improving attendance requires knowledge of guidance and regulations but also expertise in working with families to remove barriers to attendance and safeguard pupils. Just as those barriers are regularly evolving, so too is the training that school staff require to address them.
Training on attendance will be included in the school's continued professional development offer for all staff.
As a minimum this should include all staff understanding:

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances,
- the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of registers, o the school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance and the processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it.

Relationship to other policies

The attendance policy should be read in conjunction with the policies on admissions, PSHE, inclusion, and current guidance for staff on the registration of pupils. The home-school agreement is also pertinent.

Monitoring and review

The policy will be reviewed annually or at any time when statutory guidance is amended.

Policy written June 2022 (in response to the DFE Guidance Working together to improve school attendance published May 2022, which applied from Sept 2022)

Reviewed: Sept 23, November 2024, November 2025

Next review: November 2026

APPENDIX 1 LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME – INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Absence and Attendance Recording, Including Leave of Absence

When marking our registers, we will apply the national codes as outlined and regulated by the Department of Education guidance to accurately record and report attendance.

Leave of absence

The headteacher can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. The headteacher will restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstance set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances*

The headteacher can also allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities or to attend other schools or settings.

*The law states that a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if the school considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Permission may only be given by a person authorised by the school's proprietor to do so. Each application must be judged individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant background context behind each request.

In general, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation does not constitute an exceptional circumstance. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil may be absent.

The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.

Parents making an application for Leave of Absence are advised to provide sufficient information and notice to allow the Headteacher to consider all exceptional circumstances and notify the parents of their decision. The school may request further information or supporting documentation where appropriate.

If parents have not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to confirm whether the leave is authorised prior to the start of the absence.

Where applications for Leave of Absence are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to attend school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, the absence will be recorded as an "unauthorised". If additional days are taken either before or after the requested period, they may also be considered as part of the leave of absence.

Applications for Leave of Absence that are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation, and any such absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council. Penalty notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings.

When absence is granted by the head teacher, the parent will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in a possible children missing from education procedure being instigated.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices will be issued by the Local Authority on request of the Head teacher to parents or carers if your child(ren) are absent from school. Penalty notices will be issued in line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices. Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct WCC PN code of conduct.

The national threshold set out in the statutory guidance states that a penalty notice must be considered for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10-week period may span different terms or school years.

The school will prioritise a 'support first' approach offering support to families in cases where it is appropriate. Penalty notices can still be issued where support is not appropriate, such as leave of absence in term time or when support has not been engaged with.

If the Local Authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate in an individual case, the Authority shall retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. An example of this is where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absences for birthdays or other family events.

Penalty Notices will be issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices – 4 in total).

- First penalty notice: The amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.
- Second penalty notice within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount.

A national limit of 2 penalty notices that can be issued to a parent of the same child within a rolling 3-year period has been set within the National Framework, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) a Penalty Notice will not be issued. The matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996 or alternative action may be considered including other legal interventions.

APPENDIX 2 – Request for leave of absence form

Warwickshire County Council
Children and Young People Directorate

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR A SCHOOL PUPIL IN TERM TIME IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES ONLY

Important Information for Parents/Carers

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

- **Exceptional circumstances**: All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion:
  - It must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with.
  - Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.
  - If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.
- When making an application for Leave of Absence the resident parent is advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify of their decision.
- Requests for leave of absence should made before any arrangements confirmed or money committed.
- It is advised if you have not received notification from the school regarding the leave of absence request, it is your responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of leave.
- Failure to make a request for a leave of absence in advance will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.
- Any additional days taken either side of a leave of absence period, which has not been applied for, may be considered as part of the leave of absence period and be unauthorised.
- Unauthorised Leave of Absences will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service upon the child's return to school for consideration of a Penalty Notice.

Please see over for important information relating to the changes in relation to Penalty Notices

I wish to apply for Leave of Absence from school to be granted to:

Name of Child: _____ Form Group: _____

First Date of Proposed Absence: _____ Last date of Proposed Absence: _____

Expected date of return to school: _____

Reason for Proposed Absence – please provide reasons to support the application including evidence (*see overleaf before completing*):

……
……
……

Total Days Requested on this occasion. ☐

(*For siblings*) I have also applied to _____ School/Academy for leave of absence for
(Insert child/children's name)

Signature of resident Parent/Carer: _____

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

For school use only: NAME OF CHILD: _____ Date received by school: _____

1st date of absence requested by parents: …… Last date of absence requested by parents: ……

Expected date of return to school (as advised by parents): ……

****

Absence: Authorised / Unauthorised / Split (please delete as appropriate)

The reasons for this decision are: ……

- **LOA record sheet to be completed by school and submitted where verbal requests made/ for other relevant information**

Head teacher/Attendance Lead: …… Date: ……

- ***Copy of this completed section should be sent back to parent with letter***

© Warwickshire Attendance Service

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education through regular attendance at a school or otherwise (ie home education) (Section 7 Education Act 1996). If a child who is of compulsory school age, who is registered at school and fails to attend regularly, it is the parent that will be guilty of an offence (Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996).

- Section 576 Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:
  - Any natural parent, whether married or not;
  - Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person;
  - Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

- The National threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. If the local authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the national threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events. Please refer to Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for non-school attendance and penalty notices for further information.

Leave of Absence taken <u>after 1 September 2024:</u>

The law relating to Penalty Notices has been amended and Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absences taken after 1 September 2024 will be issued in accordance with the updated legislation.

- **<u>First Leave of Absence offence:</u>** The Penalty Notice amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.

- **<u>Second Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice):</u>** The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount.

- ***<u>Third Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice).</u>*** *A penalty notice will not be issued, and the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.*

- Any Penalty Notices issued and/or prosecution will apply to <u>each parent for each child who fails to attend school (e.g 2 absent children is 2 offences under section 444 Education Act 1996).</u>

- A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, however if the Penalty Notice expires and is not paid Warwickshire County Council will consider instigating a criminal prosecution under the Education Act 1996.

- Payment plans will not be offered and/or payments received outside of the 28 day period will not be accepted.

- Where criminal proceedings are issued and a parent is found guilty, the court could issue a sentence of a fine of up to £1,000 for a Section 444(1) conviction; or £2,500, a community sentence period or a custodial period of up to 3 months for a Section 444(1A) conviction.

APPENDIX 3: Children Missing Education

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school should make an immediate referral to Warwickshire County Council's Children Missing Education (CME) Service.

Missing Education Service can be contacted on 01926 742036.

Reasonable steps could constitute: Telephone calls to all known contacts
Letters home (including recorded delivery)
Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
Possible home visits where safe to do so
Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts
Enquiries with any other service known to be involved with the pupil/family All contacts and outcomes to be recorded on the pupil's yellow file

Upon receipt of a referral from the school, the CME Service will then continue to attempt to track the child, for at least a further 10 school days, using access to additional contacts/services, e.g. housing. If this also fails to establish the pupil's whereabouts, the school will be informed by email and may then, but not before, remove the pupil from roll and report to the LA.

Deletions from roll agreed with the CME Service will normally be backdated to the first day of absence.

If the CME Service is able to contact the pupil and her/his parents, arrangements will be made with the school and family for a return to education, including a re-integration programme where necessary. Where pupils continue to be absent the non- school attendance procedures detailed in the school policy will be followed.

If the pupil has registered at another school, the school will delete the child's name from our roll and transfer the child's educational records to the new school in the normal way. Any child protection records will be transferred separately and securely for the attention of the DSL in the new school and a receipt secured.

Pupils leaving the school for known destinations outside the maintained sector in England and Wales will be updated to the School-to-School database. This includes private/independent schools, schools in other countries (including Scotland and Northern Ireland) and pupils moving into home education. The latter will be formally notified to the ESWS Home Education Officer by the school as soon as written confirmation is received from the parent(s). If no confirmation is received the above Missing Children procedures will apply.