



**The Whitchurch Church of England
Federation**

**Attendance Policy
Implementation Date – September 2022
Review Date – September 2025**

Introduction

We believe that the primary years are an important time when the foundations for learning are made and good attendance is therefore vital. Children need to attend the academies regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment across our Federation, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole Federation approach to securing good attendance, and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

Regular attendance is a major factor that contributes to a child's progress. If your child has 10 days of absence during the year, his or her attendance for the school year will be only 94.7% and therefore at the level where there is likely to be an impact on learning. If your child had 10 days of absence every year over the 7 years spent at primary school, it would be equivalent to him or her missing an entire term in school.

In law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school. Only schools have the power to authorise or grant a leave of absence.

The Federation are committed to supporting parents and carers who are finding school attendance an issue. A Federation based Family Support Assistant is available for support and advice.

We welcome parents to discuss any issues that they may be having, with the class teacher, Head of School Inclusion and Families or Family Support Assistant. There may be practical advice and support that can be given or signposting to other agencies may be useful.

We are committed to:

- Improving pupil's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Creating an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality is recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the Federation.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Raising awareness of the importance of pupil's uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education with parents, carers and pupils.
- Ensuring that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children (as well as KS1 and KS2) to establish good habits from an early age.
- Working in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Access Service, so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absences.
- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, valued and encouraged to take responsibility for their learning.
- Establishing a pattern of monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

- Recognising the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers in promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils and parents.
- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Maintaining effective communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at one of the Academies and/or nursery which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at the Academies and nursery.
- Developing initiatives to promote and celebrate good attendance.

The member of staff responsible for Attendance across the Federation is the **Federation Head of School, Inclusion and Families, Ms. Sarah Walsh**, and can be contacted via wiaadmin@sbmat.org (Infant Academy) or whjadmin@sbmat.org (Junior Academy). Staff, parents and pupils will be expected to contact the Federation Head of School for queries or concerns about attendance.

The Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following Federation / Academy policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Children Missing in Education Policy

Definitions; understanding types of absence – Authorised and Unauthorised

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an **exceptional reason** for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

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 the parent/carer. For example, if the parent has phoned to explain that their child has been unwell and this is the reason for their 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.

Unauthorised absence: An absence that is classified as unauthorised, is when a child is away from the school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason. This includes but is not limited to:

- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, or to visit family members.
- Absences which have not been explained.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed.

A school may if required change an authorised absence to unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated with parents/carers. For example, a parent may state a child is unwell and absent, and on return to school it is evident the child has been on holiday.

Persistent absence (PA):

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

Procedures

Our Federation will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/ carers have not communicated with the relevant Academy.
- To inform parents/ carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.

- To work with parents/carers to improve individual's attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Educational Access Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to any academy initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance to Shropshire Council and the Department for Education as requested.

Responsibilities

All members of Federation staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. **Attendance is everyone's responsibility**. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Local Governing Committee (LGC)

The LGC has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the Federation.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the Federation's ethos and policies.
- Working with senior leaders to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing in Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across each Academy.
- Appointing a senior leader to the attendance officer role.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the Federation's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Head of School – Inclusion and Families (Attendance Officer)

The Head of School Inclusion and Families is responsible for:

- The overall strategic approach to attendance across the Federation.
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.

- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
- Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Making referrals to the Local Authority (LA) Education Access Service.
- Informing Shropshire LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too by emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

Administration Staff

Administration staff in each academy office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Talking to and recording messages from parents regarding attendance.
- Ensuring that late children are signed in, including reasons for lateness.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made by parents.
- Ensuring children are signed out of school and record reasons if leaving early.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking at particularly for either poor attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and / or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Head of School Inclusion and Families and Family Support Assistant.
- Regularly meeting with the Head of School and Family Support Assistant to monitor school attendance figures.
- Making referrals to Education Access Service.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Education Access Service.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

Family Support Assistant

The Family Support Assistant is responsible for:

- Contacting families where concerns are raised about attendance including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.

- Regularly meeting with the Head of School and Administration staff to monitor school attendance figures.
- Making referrals to Education Access Service.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Education Access Service.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Parents

Ensuring children's regular attendance at school is a parents' /carers legal responsibility (section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school, that is not authorised by the school, creates an offence in law.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the relevant Academy with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the relevant Academy if their details change.
- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at medical appointments.
- Contacting the relevant Academy office on the first morning of absence between 8.30 – 9.00am. (An answer phone is available before 8.30am).
- Making sure that absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence.
- Informing the relevant Academy in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical appointment we require evidence from the doctor or dentist (medical letter or appointment card).
- Avoiding taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only requesting for leave of absence if it is exceptional circumstances.
- Requesting written permission by the Principal, for any absence that is not illness related, including medical appointments.
- Ensuring that their child is in school every morning at 8.50am at the Infant Academy and 8:45am at the Junior Academy ready for registration.
- Working in partnership with the school on matters concerning their child's continued good attendance, including informing the relevant Academy (in confidence) of any circumstances which may be affecting their child's attendance.
- Providing a doctor's note for any prolonged ill-health.

Attendance Expectations - Registration and recording absence

The Federation has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day / nursery session.

The Infant Academy doors open at 8.50am and close at 9.00am and Junior Academy doors open at 8:45am and close at 9.00am.

Nursery sessions differ depending on the age of the children and their Early Years entitlement, and parents/ carers are made aware of times of sessions at registration.

It is vital that children are at school / nursery at the start of their sessions and also collected promptly. The start of the school day/ sessions are used to promote independence in self-help skills as well as being used for learning time. If a child is late they can miss work, time with the class teacher and peers, as well as cause disruption to the lesson, themselves and others. In addition, it can be embarrassing arriving late and may lead to further absences.

Legally the attendance register must be marked twice a day, at the start of the morning and afternoon session.

Morning

Children must be in school ready for registration at 8.50am at the Infant Academy and 8:45am at the Junior Academy. A child arriving before the attendance register has closed (between 9:00am and 9:30am) will be marked as late. Those arriving after the attendance register has closed will be recorded as unauthorised unless the Academy has been notified in advance.

Afternoon

The register will be marked again after lunch for those children in school.

The afternoon register will be marked at 1:00pm at the Junior Academy and 1:05pm at the Infant Academy. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.

The afternoon register will close at 1:10pm (Junior Academy) and 1:15pm (Infant Academy). Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present.

Afternoon nursery children need to be in the Infant Academy at the time stated at registration depending on their Early Years entitlement (15 or 30 hours).

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any child who is absent must be recorded as such at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher and attendance records are documented using ARBOR software. Attendance records are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

A child not attending school is considered a **Safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Absence procedures

Parents will be required to contact the relevant Academy office via telephone before 9:00am on the first day of their child's absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g. one school day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the Academy by the close of the morning register to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent by telephone call as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school.

Each Academy will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.

- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

Any Looked After Child or vulnerable pupil who is marked absent without a reason will be reported to one of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and where necessary, safeguarding procedures followed.

The Federation will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the Federation reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

In the case of Persistent Absence, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the Head of School Inclusion and Families. The Federation will inform the LA Education Access Service, on a termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation.

Where a pupil has not returned to the Academy for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from the Academy without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the Academy will remove the pupil from the admissions register if the Academy and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. Therefore, attendance is monitored across The Whitchurch CE Federation and data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling below 95% the Academy may contact parents/carers via a letter.

If a child has an attendance level that is falling towards 90%, then, depending on the reasons for the absence, an invitation to the Academy will be issued in order to meet the Federation Head of School and / or Family Support Assistant to discuss ways to improve the child's attendance. This discussion will also include the legal implications of such absences. The LA Education Access Service will be alerted to the pupil's attendance.

Parents/ carers will be offered support by the Federation, as the Federation has all children's best interests at the forefront of our ethos. If there are further factors which concern parents about their child, referrals may be suggested to Shropshire Early Help to request additional support. **See Appendix One.**

Children at The Whitchurch CE Federation are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their child's level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and parents have the responsibility to be positive role models to their child by encouraging them to be in school on time with the appropriate equipment for a school day.

Lateness and Punctuality

Once the doors are closed at **9.00 am** the only entrance into each Academy is via the Academy office. Any child coming into school after the doors are closed will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those children who are late and this information may be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary. Arrival after the close of registration (**9.30am**) will be marked as unauthorised absence code "U" in line with Shropshire Council and Department for Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as absence.

If a pupil is marked late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded "M".

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other pupils. **Parents/ carers will be seen to be failing to meet their legal responsibilities to ensure that their child is receiving full time education. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.**

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the individual Academy will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues. If support is not accepted and lateness and absences are still an issue, a referral will be made to Education Access Service and / or Early Help.

Request for Leave of Absence

Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the relevant Principal – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the Principal, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil's education into account. The Principal's decision is not subject to appeal; however, the Federation will be sympathetic to requests for absence by parents, and will not deny any request without good reason.

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013, the Education Regulations (Pupil registration: England) state that:

'Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.'

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the Principal will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from the Academy.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and in **most cases holidays will not be authorised.**

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form, available from the Academy office at least two weeks prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence (and before making any travel arrangements).

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above **10 per cent** for any reason

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The Federation cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the Principal in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Medical appointments

Parents will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

Performances and activities, including paid work

The Federation will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances or activities, whether they receive payment or not, which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school's absence(s).

Further information can be found on the Shropshire LA School Attendance page. See link; [Children in entertainment](#)

Religious observance

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least two weeks in advance. The Federation will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The Federation will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion. The Federation may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

SEND- and health-related absences

The Federation recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the Special Educational Needs Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, each Academy will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any Education Health Care plans or individual Health Plans that have been implemented. The relevant Academy will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where either Academy has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. All pupils will be supported with their mental health in accordance with the Federation's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, each Academy will:

- Inform Shropshire LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.

- Provide Shropshire LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about Academy events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The relevant Academy will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, each Academy will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan.
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through the Common Assessment Framework.
- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and play times.
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out.
- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence.
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons.
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

Attendance intervention

In order to ensure the Federation has effective procedures for managing absence, the Federation Head of School will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
 - Sending letters to parents.
 - Having a meeting with parents.
 - Engaging with LA Education Access Service.
 - Using fixed penalty notices.
 - Creating attendance clinics.

The Federation will use attendance data, in line with the 'Monitoring and analysing absence' section of this policy, to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

Each Academy will acknowledge outstanding attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- Be Here Bear (Infant Academy)

- Cool to be in School (Junior Academy)
- Attendance Certificates, prizes, stickers (Both Academies)
- The Federation will develop strategies for ensuring that pupils with health needs or home circumstances that result in additional absences are not unfairly excluded from attendance rewards, e.g. by setting individualised targets.

Working with parents to improve attendance

The Federation will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.

The Federation will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

Each Academy will ensure that there are **two** sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the Academy has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The Federation will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the Principal in advance.

The Federation will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the Federation Head of School / Family Support Assistant will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The Federation will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in one of the Academies, e.g. bullying, the Federation Head of School will work with the Principal and any relevant Academy staff, e.g. the Designated Safeguarding Lead and SENDCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the Academy's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the Federation Head of School will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

Persistent Absence

Each Academy will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of Persistent Absence to attend school. These include:

- Meeting with pupils and parents to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed.

The Federation will focus particularly on pupils who have rates of absence over 10 per cent, and will work with Shropshire Education Access Service and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these pupils are facing.

Where a pupil at risk of Persistent Absence also at increased risk of harm, the Federation will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the Federation's duty of care. The Federation will also bear in mind that the continuation of severe Persistent Absence following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Legal intervention

The Federation, under the guidance of Shropshire Education Access Services will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect after a term, consideration will be given to:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the relevant Academy's point of contact in the Education Access team.
- Working with Shropshire LA to put a parenting contract or an education supervision order in place.
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.
- Where the above measures are not effective, parents will be issued with a fixed penalty notice in line with the LA's code of conduct.
- Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the relevant Academy will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

See Appendix Two.

Monitoring and analysing absence

Monitoring

The Federation Head of School, Family Support Assistant and Administration staff meet regularly (at least twice per half term) to monitor attendance data and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents. Concerns are also referred to the Education Welfare Officer. The Education Welfare Officer visits the Federation regularly each term to check and monitor attendance. The Education Welfare Officer works with each Academy and parents to improve children's attendance, and may issue fixed penalty notices if attendance meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

Each Academy will collect data regarding punctuality and authorised and unauthorised absence, for:

- The Academy cohort as a whole.
- Individual year groups.
- Individual pupils.
- Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds.
- Other groups of pupils, e.g. pupils with SEND, LAC and pupils eligible for pupil premium.
- Pupils at risk of Persistent Absence

- The Federation Head of School will conduct a thorough analysis of the above data on at least a **half-termly** basis to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:
 - Patterns in uses of certain codes.
 - Particular days of poor attendance.
 - Historic trends of attendance and absence.
 - Barriers to attendance.

The Federation Head of School will be responsible for monitoring how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future.

The Local Governing Committee will regularly review attendance data, and will support the Academies in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

The Federation will also benchmark its attendance data against national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement, and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools and/or Academies.

18. Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year.

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Principal of each Academy and the Federation Head of School. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Appendix One

Attendance Monitoring Procedures

The Whitchurch CE Federation has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

1. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported by the close of the morning register. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided.
2. Any N codes not established are reported to the Federation Head of School.
3. Any N codes not established for Looked After or vulnerable pupils are reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
4. If a pupil's attendance falls below **95 percent**, a letter may be sent home raising concerns that their attendance has fallen below the Federation's expected standard.
5. If a pupil's attendance falls below **90 per cent**, then depending on the reasons for absence, a letter is sent home explaining that the pupil's attendance is now being monitored and invitation to the Academy will be issued to discuss the child's attendance with the Federation Head of School or Family Support Assistant. The LA Education Access Service will be alerted to the pupil's attendance.
6. The pupil's attendance is monitored for **three weeks** and, if attendance does not improve after this time, Education Access Service will send a warning letter to the parents. The parents are required to attend a further meeting in the Academy with the Federation Head of School and set attendance targets for their child. The Academy will consider a referral to Early Help to request additional support.
7. After the **three -week** monitoring period, and if targets are met, a letter is sent home from the Federation Head of School to congratulate the pupil on improving attendance. Monitoring and communication with the parents continues until attendance stabilises to at least **95 percent**.
8. If targets are not met, the Federation Head of School will make further contact with the Education Welfare Officer. Education welfare protocol is followed.

Appendix Two

Penalty notices to Address Poor Attendance and other legal measures.

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which their child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Shropshire Council will use the full range of legal matters to secure good attendance. **This includes Fixed Penalty Notices, Prosecution through the Magistrates Court, Parenting Orders and Parenting Contracts.**

What is a Penalty Notice?

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (those for which the school cannot or has not given permission). Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in Court whilst still securing an improvement in a pupil's attendance.

Payment of a Penalty Notice enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction.

Why has it been introduced?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime. Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer term life opportunities.

What are the costs?

Payment within 21 days of receipt of a Notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this but within 28 days.

When are they used?

Shropshire Council considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps)
- Inappropriate parentally-condoned absence.
- Unauthorised leave of absence / holidays in term time or excessive delayed return from an extended holiday without prior school permission.
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed).

In every case a pupil will have had a minimum of 10 school sessions (i.e. 5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during a term before a Penalty Notice is considered. The Authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/ carers to improve

attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions. Attendance is of such importance to all of us that the Authority will use the powers if this is the only way of securing a child's schooling.

Procedure

You will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Notice being issued. (In the case of leave of absence/holidays in term time, this is included on the application form.) Following the receipt of this warning your child must have no unauthorised absences from school. Absences attributed to medical reasons must be supported by evidence from a medical practitioner. There is no limit to the number of times a formal warning of possible Penalty Notice issue may be made in any particular case.

Appeals

There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning you can make representation should you wish.

Non-Payment

You have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full, after which the Authority is required under the Act to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of poor attendance by your child.

If proven, this can attract a range of fines up to £2,500 and/or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders, Community Sentences or imprisonment up to 3 months, depending upon circumstances.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However, it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Notice, depending upon the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school and support agencies such as Education Access.