

Bitterne CE Primary School



Attendance and Absence Policy

Headteacher

Last review- February 2023

Next review – September 2024

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATTENDANCE and ABSENCE POLICIES

The policy was written schools with reference to staff and governors and as a result of reading the Southampton City Council document 'School Attendance Matters' and [Working together to improve school attendance May 2022](#)

In Feb 2023, the DFE published the [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#), and this guidance is reflected in the policy

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STATEMENT OF INTENT (Attendance and Absence)

- ◆ To clearly communicate with all staff parents and children our aspiration to promote good attendance and punctuality and set high expectations for every pupil.
- ◆ To implement the law as set out in the 1944 and 1996 Education Act while considering our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- ◆ To ensure a consistent approach to attendance and absence across the school which is underpinned by systematic analysis of attendance patterns, with targeted follow up, as needed. Our school will always consider the individual circumstances of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance.
- ◆ To ensure procedures for authorised absence are clear, fair and easily understood by parents and carers.
- ◆ Liaise with outside agencies with regard to attendance for vulnerable children especially children missing education which can act as a vital warning sign for a range of safeguarding issues.
- ◆ Engage fully with Southampton SAST (School Attendance and Safeguarding Team) and with other local agencies in supporting families to overcome barriers to good attendance.
- ◆ To establish calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment, underpinned by our core Christian values of 'love, trust and forgiveness' where all pupils want to attend and can learn and thrive.

The Importance of school attendance Page 6 Working together to improve school attendance

- *Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.*
- *Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all*

teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education page 6/7

- *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.*
- *This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%). At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 41. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%)*
- *For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent)³ and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study)*

Attendance Policy

Parents/Carers have a duty in law (Education Act 1996) to ensure that children of statutory school age receive an appropriate education “by attendance at school or otherwise”. For the great majority of children at Bitterne CE Primary School this will involve regular attendance at school. The achievement and maintenance of high standards in pupil attendance is the shared responsibility of parents/carers, Bitterne CE Primary School staff, the Governing Body and the Local Authority. It is through an active partnership that the best results can be achieved and this underpins our core Christian values of Love, trust and forgiveness.

Bitterne CE Primary has a statutory duty to deliver 380 sessions (190 days) per year (2 sessions per day separated by a break) in accordance with Session Regulations 2011. This takes into account 5 agreed INSET days. The dates for INSET days are always communicated to parents well in advance. If Bitterne CE Primary School is prevented from meeting for one or more sessions because of an unavoidable event, leaders will endeavour to find a practical way of holding extra sessions. If the school, in consultation with governors, cannot find a practical way of doing this then the school is not required to make up the lost sessions.

For children starting YR who are below statutory school age, the school operates a short stagger period for children born in autumn, spring and summer. This allows each group to have one session on their own, as a group, before staying for lunch and then the whole day. We believe that this short

process helps to ensure children settle quickly and are happy as they start school and build relationships. All children are full time after this 3 day period. Where the staggered start is a concern for any parent, for example too slow to too quick, the child's individual needs should be discussed with the Headteacher.

Good attendance is a learned behavior, and we strive to establish good patterns of attendance from the outset and as an integral part of our distinctive Christian character.

There is a clear correlation between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance and achievement. Furthermore, poor attendance may lead to social exclusion and, in some cases, to anti-social behaviour. The school promotes attendance through wider school improvement strategies including attainment, behaviour, bullying, SEND, medical conditions, safeguarding, wellbeing and support for disadvantaged students.

The role of the school and the Local Authority is to support parents/carers to meet their responsibilities and, where necessary, take action to enforce attendance. The school and the Local Authority also have a responsibility to support pupils' attendance at school by providing the best possible education and to provide advice and support to those pupils and their parents / carers, who have difficulty in maintaining a good level of attendance.

At Bitterne CE Primary believe that successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly means we have to work alongside local partners, with the aim to work collaboratively with and not against families. The process is set out in the chart below

Attendance Register

By law we must have an attendance register and all pupils have their attendance recorded.

The register is completed electronically at the start of the morning session and again at the start of the afternoon session. Children present have to respond individually to their name.

Registers, including electronic ones, are legal records and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 3 years from the date of entry. As the attendance register is a record of the pupils present at the time it was taken, the register should only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are made, all schools must ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name and title of the person who made the amendment.

Arriving after the gates have closed

The register will be open for 30 minutes after the gates close at 8.40am. Therefore any child who arrives after 9.10am will be marked as absent of the whole morning session. This will be an unauthorised absence.

Where a child arrives via the main office between 8.40am and 9.10am they will be marked as late. We monitor punctuality closely and will follow up with families where there is an emerging pattern of not arriving on time.

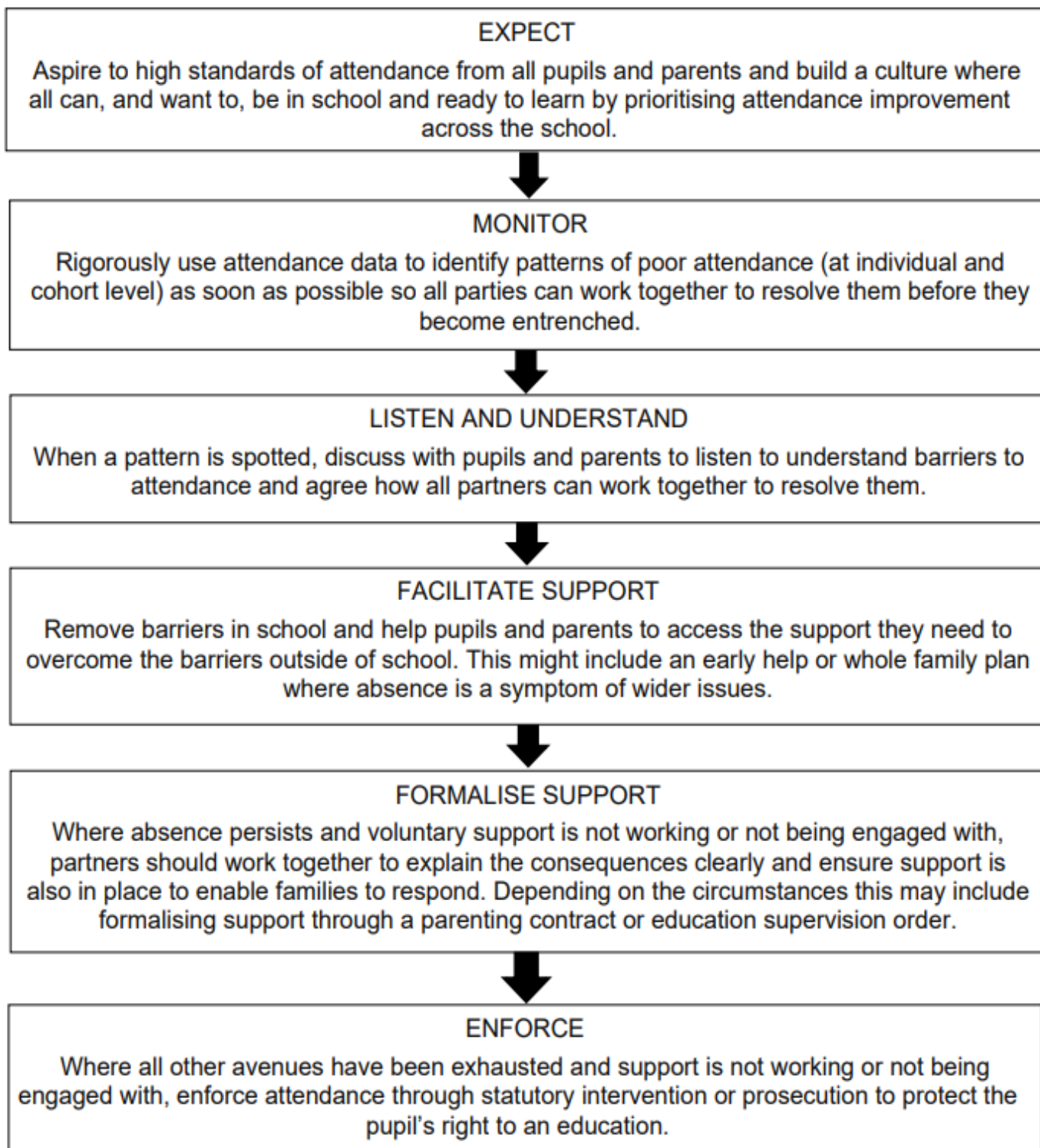
Registers will also remain open for 30 minutes after the afternoon session starts.

Admissions Register (School roll)

By law the school must have and maintain the admission register (school roll). This must contain specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended.

A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, applies.

The following flow chart outlines the process we follow at Bitterne CE Primary in order to ensure high levels of attendance for all pupils.



Expected First Day of Attendance

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

All schools must notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register and must provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

At Bitterne CE Primary this duty is automatically done through the ONE system to Southampton City Council (SCC).

The work of the Southampton School Attendance and Safeguarding Team (SAST) is central to raising standards of attendance across the city as a whole and within individual schools. Education Welfare Officers work closely with our school, pupils and their parents / carers who need support to improve attendance. The service also has a wider role in providing support to pupils and families linking them to other statutory and voluntary agencies that can help.

The Local Authority and Bitterne CE Primary School aim to secure the full-time attendance of every pupil. Where full time attendance is not possible, absence may be authorised by the school based on information from a parent / carer who can account for legitimate absence of the pupil, such as illness. Where absence is not authorised, or a non-attendance is of concern, the school will take swift and appropriate action to investigate and remedy the situation.

When a child is absent

We expect all parents to contact the school on the first day their child is absent to explain the reason. This can be by ringing 023 80499494 and leaving a voice mail before 8am or speaking to a member of the office team after 8am. Where parents are unable to ring, they can email info@bitterneceprimary.net. The office team may call back where the reason is not given or more detail required.

If we have not had any communication by 9.20am, the school will follow this process to seek a reason for absence.

Telephone first contact – telephone second contact – email or text contacts to ask them to phone the school.

If after contact has still not been made on the first day and absence continues, the school will either request our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) conducts a home visit through our purchased time, or if unavailable, the school may home visit to establish contact. A risk assessment would be completed before hand. The HT / DHT will be notified of absences each day and where a child has a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, liaison with the child's social worker will take place.

A referral to the School nurse may be offered, if this would help

For this reason, and in an emergency, we will strive to ensure every child has at least 2 named emergency contacts.

Where an absence is initially recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code will be added as soon as the reason is established, but no later than 5 working days after the session.

The school will -

- a) Distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences in the registers.
- b) Regularly analyse patterns of attendance for groups of children, such as; classes, year groups, gender, disadvantaged, ethnicity, SEND, LAC (looked after child), PLAC (previously looked after child) and children with a social worker or who have ever had a social worker. This is on a weekly basis for individual pupils.
- c) Publish the percentages of absences in annual reports and termly HT report to governors.
- d) Include information on unauthorised and authorised absences in pupils' annual reports.
- e) Make registers available to SAST Officers and Inspectors.
- f) Provide an overview of attendance, alongside our EWO at the termly targeted review meeting
- g) Report attendance patterns to outside agencies for 'looked after children', children with 'Child Protection Plans' and children with a Statement of Special Educational Need.
- h) Share attendance reports with parents at each parents' meeting and explain what this means in terms of missed learning.
- i) Invite parents to regular meetings to discuss attendance and engagement, including any barriers to achieving good attendance. These meetings may also include our EWO where a child is persistently or severely absent.
- j) Identify pupils who need support from wider patterns as quickly as possible and make necessary referrals. (Education Welfare, Children's resource Service, Health/ CAMHS (Child and adolescent mental health service) / School Nurse) etc)
- k) Make statutory data returns to the local authority
- l) Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable absence and provide support to the child and family.
- m) Ensure class teachers are fully aware of and involved in promoting good attendance, including children whose attendance is a focus and the strategies in place to support the child and family. The link between attendance and attainment will be discussed at pupil progress meetings between each teacher and leaders.
- n) Share half termly, termly and yearly data and analysis with governors and what key actions the school is taking to ensure at least good attendance for all. Governors will be made aware of local and national benchmarking.
- o) Treat all parents and children in line with our core Christian values of love, trust and forgiveness. The school will ensure that parents feel listened to and an integral part of the process of support to remove barriers to good attendance, whether they are in school barriers or those outside of school.
- p) The school follows the agreed Southampton City Guidance for the procedures for exclusion, Children Missing Education, Elective Home Education, Part-time timetables and Penalty Notices. These are updated yearly by SCC
- q) The school will follow and work alongside SCC Admissions procedures to minimise the time a child may be out of school due to moving areas. When a child is admitted or taken off roll, the procedures for pupil registration will be followed.
- r) Ensure all staff have training on this policy and the importance of promoting high expectations for attendance.

Governors will:

- a) Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- b) Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- c) 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.
- d) Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

Mental health issues that are affecting attendance

Please refer to ' Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issues is affecting attendance ' .
DFE Feb 2023.

This guidance applies to any pupils displaying any social, emotional or mental health issues affecting their attendance. It is not only for pupils who have a diagnosed mental disorder, or a disability or special educational need. There will be additional considerations for children with a disability, EHCP or who have a social worker. see below

Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, school work, exams or variable moods. However, it is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly and that frequent absences may actually heighten anxiety about attending in future.

As for all absences, parents must contact the school on the first day of absence with the reason for absence. The school must record absences as authorised where it is not possible for a pupil to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related).

Where needed, the school will involve parents /carers at an early stage to create and agree a plan to implement 'reasonable adjustments*' with the aim to alleviate specific barriers to attendance. The school understands that parents know their child best and are well-placed to support them to recognize and manage their normal emotions and that parents/ carers of children experiencing social, emotional or mental health issues play a vital role in the attendance or non-attendance of that child. The plan, agreed by school and parents and carers, will aim to maximise face to face attendance as much as possible. The plan will need to be agreed by school, and parents/carers before it is implemented and will be reviewed regularly.

The plan will include adjustments for pastoral support tailored to the individual child which may be in school or a referral to an external agency such as school nurse, counselling service, Mental Health Support Teams (MHST), No Limits, CAMHS, BRS (Behaviour Resource Service) , EP, (EBSA-Emotionally Based School Avoidance) with everyone working to maximise the child's time in school. The school will also update our EWO at the termly review meetings where mental health is a concern linked to attendance.

**A 'reasonable adjustment' is any action taken to support attendance. These adjustments will be agreed by and regularly reviewed by all parties. This term is used in general terms within this policy and the DFE guidance, as opposed to relating to a school's duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with a disability under section 20 of the 2010 Equality Act.*

When considering reasonable adjustments, school staff will consider the individual circumstances of the child, being mindful of our safeguarding responsibilities set out in KCSIE.

Parents/carers have a duty, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives an efficient full-time education. This is why involving parents at an early stage is so important.

Where parents and carers are finding engaging in the agreed plan challenging for whatever reason. The school recognises the need for whole family practical support and / or Early help (Children and Families First) support to try to address wider causes of poor attendance.

Where support offered is not engaged with and all other options have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate, the school will work with the Local Authority to consider whether to formalise support or to enforce attendance through legal intervention in the normal way under their existing powers.

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in the pupil's best interests and reasonable adjustments have been exhausted, a plan to help a child attend may well involve the use of a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition (including mental health) prevent a pupil from attending school full-time. This means that a part time timetable will not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

The plan will seek to maximise face to face attendance in school. The school will consider, alongside parents, whether it is appropriate to provide some sort of remote learning but only if the pupil is well enough and able to learn and would be in line with the school's remote learning policy.

When a part-time timetable is used the school, parents/ carers and pupil all agree for the pupil to be absent from school for part of the week or day, and therefore must treat the absence as authorised (absence with leave)

Any part-time timetables will be in accordance with SCC guidance on part -time timetable and will be reported to our Education Welfare Officer EWO.

Additional considerations for children with SEND, EHCP and/ or an assigned social worker.

The Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issues is affecting attendance 'DFE Feb 2023' guidance applies to all pupils, but staff at Bitterne CE should consider whether a child with a SEND need may be more anxious about attending school. If a child is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, we will need to consider our duty to make reasonable adjustments under section 20 of that Act. The principles of maintaining consistent high ambitions for the attendance of this cohort of children, remain the same, and schools should strive to maximise their time spent in school.

Most pupils with SEND attend well, but where attendance does emerge as a concern, any additional needs should be considered as part of attendance conversations, ensuring that any plans put in place are agreed with the child's parents/carers.

If the child has an EHC plan, school staff should consider communicating with the LA at an early stage once they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the child's needs. In many cases the school may be able to agree with parents/carers adjustments to its policies and practices that are consistent with the special educational provision set out in the EHC plan. In other cases, the additional or different attendance support identified may require the LA to review and amend the EHC plan.

If a child has a social worker, we will work closely with them to ensure high standards of attendance are maintained and this will be reviewed and monitored at each meeting with the social worker with regular updates on attendance with reasons for absence, as needed.

Promoting Attendance

The school will promote excellent attendance and implement a clear and fair reward scheme for children with outstanding attendance. The school will also identify children whose attendance has improved significantly over a term or year.

School newsletters will regularly update parents on attendance and the guidelines for penalty notices, punctuality and term dates.

The school also has close links with our School Nursing Team, who may also become involved in supporting health issues to increase attendance.

Both the Education Welfare Officer and the School Nursing team may be present at parent meetings for attendance to offer support.

The school works closely with the Education Welfare Service. Through the termly reviews, the attendance for any child below 93% is discussed. The school regularly sends out letters to parents where attendance is reducing or below 90% to inform parents and in partnership find ways to increase attendance. This may involve offering involvement from the school nurse or inviting parents in for a meeting alongside our EWO.

Each term, where a child has had attendance over 97%, they will be presented with a certificate. Where a child has had 100% attendance over the term, they will also receive a certificate.

Attendance registration sheets will be available to class teachers at each parents' evening to discuss.

The school buys in extra Education Welfare Officer time each term, to allow the EWO to attend meetings with parents, home visits and other activities such as leading assemblies to promote attendance. The assemblies will resume when safe to do so or alternative virtual strategies used.

The school will actively engage with the Southampton Attendance Action Group (SAAG) and Attendance Officer network meetings.

Persistent Absence is where a child has missed 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a school year)

Severe absence is where a child is absent from school more than they are in school (missing at least 50% of school)

Where the impact of school actions does not lead to improved attendance

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with we will work with the local authority to:

- Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parent's behaviour.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).

- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

Attendance Target Setting

During the autumn term the Governing Body will set attendance targets for the future year. The school will set a challenging target to ensure sustained improvement in whole school attendance and that for all groups of children.

Children at Risk of Missing Education

This policy takes into account the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Bitterne CE Primary follows the procedures contained in:

Children Missing Education (CME) Southampton City Council Guidance.

This guidance includes the duty that Bitterne CE Primary has to notify Southampton City Council when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply where the pupil's name is removed after they have completed the school's final year, unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Bitterne CE Primary will follow the latest guidance from the DFE and agreed procedures from Southampton City Council at the first mention of a child being Electively Home Educated.

The school will contact the EHE Lead in Southampton Tina Selby for advice.

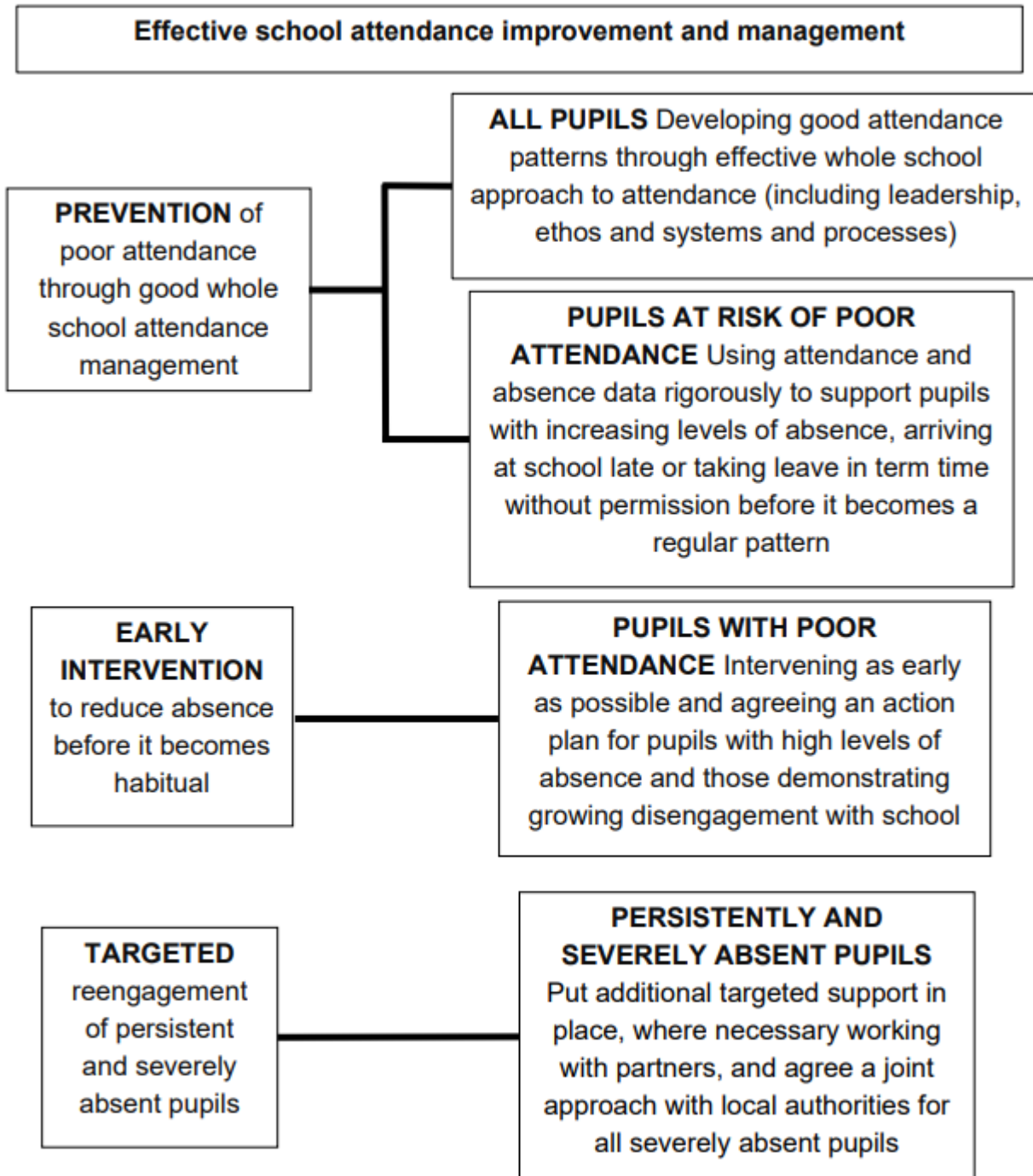
The guidance from SCC is detailed and includes an EHE leaflet that will be given to parents, along with an EHE plan. The headteacher will also ask to meet with parents considering EHE.

In line with DFE and SCC guidance, on receipt of written notification form a parent /carer to home educate, Bitterne CE Primary will inform Southampton City Council that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register.

Staff at Bitterne CE Primary should not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding excluding the pupil or because the pupil has a poor attendance record.

Bitterne CE Primary is mindful that the school should not seek to prevent parents from educating their children outside the school system. There is no requirement for parents to obtain the school or local authority's agreement to educate their child at home. Parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full-time education but this does not have to be at a school.

The diagram below sets out the 3 key areas for prevention, early intervention and targeted support to help ensure at least good attendance for all alongside the local authority and other partners.



Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, the school will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority.

We always strive to be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents and talk to pupils and parents in order to understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Analysis of attendance patterns

The school will work pro-actively with Southampton Education Welfare Officers to ensure children with attendance concerns are targeted, with possible referral to Education Welfare.

The school will analyse the patterns of attendance termly and annually in relation to various groups in school. The school will identify variation in attendance between:

- Classes
- Year groups
- Boys and girls
- Children eligible for pupil premium
- Children with SEN
- Ethnic groups

Reporting attendance

- Individuals

The school will report the attendance of each individual child on their annual report to parents. The report will identify the number of authorised and unauthorised absences

At each Parents' Evening, class teachers will discuss an individual child's attendance where this is below 90% and they are currently classed as a 'persistent absentee' (PA) according to DfE thresholds. This will focus on unauthorised absence particularly.

Through the termly Targeted Support Meeting with our Education Welfare Officer and the weekly internal attendance audits, the parents of children whose attendance is below 90% will be written to and support offered to improve attendance. This may be from the School Nurse or from within school. It may be that parents are invited to a meeting where we can discuss how we can work together to improve attendance.

A record of meetings relating to attendance will be made and may be discussed with our EWO.

- Groups

The school will report year group attendance termly to Governors as part of the Headteacher's Report. The report will also include analysis on leave requests, punctuality and authorised illness. A

further report from SCC data team provides a termly breakdown of attendance and this will also be shared with governors.

Each year a more detailed summary of attendance patterns for groups will be reported to governors. The school will have a display for attendance that shows the classes with the best attendance. This will be updated each week.

Authorised Absence Policy

The Headteacher and Governing Body wish to clarify guidance on unauthorised absence to all parents. This guidance is reviewed in light of the guidance for issuing penalty notices by Southampton City Council and Working together to improve school attendance May 2022.

The school will follow the guidance in the Southampton City Council Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices in Cases of Non-Attendance at School which is issued annually in September

The Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices is updated on the school website for information.

General Information

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. The Headteacher cannot authorise any leave of absence for family holidays.

Leave will only be authorised where the parent informs the school that there is an exceptional circumstance for leave, such as attending a wedding or funeral or a family emergency. However, we will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Where the reason given for a holiday during term time are the annual leave patterns of a parent's employer or the nature of their work, this would not be classed as an exceptional circumstance. The Headteacher will make a decision using this policy and Southampton City and DfE guidelines based on the evidence provided by a parent at the time of requesting leave.

The school requires parents to complete a leave of absence form for any leave during term time. **This must be submitted before the leave is planned.** Leave will not be authorised retrospectively. Parents may be asked for further information to supplement the information given on the leave form. For example, if the leave is for a wedding, the school may ask for a copy of the wedding invitation.

One of our core Christian values is 'Trust', and we expect parents to be honest about the reasons for their child not being in school. The school may carry out a home visit where there is reason to suggest that a child is on holiday or where the school has not been informed before-hand.

The Headteachers and Governors of Bitterne CE Primary school have followed guidance about authorised absence given by the DfE and Southampton City Council. Any leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Types of absences (further detail on coding is below in Appendix 1):

Reason for Absence	Remarks
Illness, medical and dental appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is authorised absence. Parents and carers should be encouraged to make appointments out of school hours for planned routine appointments. Parents will be asked to show or provide a copy of the appointment card or letter. The school understand that for emergency appointments it may not be possible to schedule them outside of school hours. • If a pupil is present for registration but has a medical appointment later, or returns home because of illness, no absence will be recorded for that session. • School will keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to site in case of an emergency.
Days of Religious Observance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents or carers belong, including religious festivals, would be authorised.
Exceptional circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school will consider each request individually. Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence. For example, attending the wedding of a family member or attending an exam would be acceptable, but a day's absence for a birthday, shopping trip, would not. • The school can consider: the nature of the event; its frequency; whether the parent gave advance notice; the pupil's overall attendance pattern.
Family Bereavements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school will respond sensitively to requests to attend funerals or associated events and have discretion to authorise such absences.
Traveller Children when the family is travelling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help ensure continuity of learning for traveller children, dual registration is allowed. This means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. • While the traveller is away, the base school holds the place open and records absence as authorised. • Distance learning packs are not an alternative to attendance at school.
Lateness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school will actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival, which could provide grounds for prosecution. • A child is considered to be late if they arrive through the main office after 8.40am (Late before registers close). If they arrive after 9.10am (30 minutes after school starts) (Late after register closed) this late mark will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. • In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, the school may keep the register open for a longer period. • Please note: punctual arrival to school is very important for a child's education and parents have accepted responsibility, as part of the Home-School agreement, to ensure their child arrives on time.
Off Site Educational / sporting activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave to attend taster days at other school would be authorised. • Taking part in a sporting activity that the school has approved. The activity must be supervised by a person authorised by the school.

Please refer to [Working together to improve attendance](#) pages 55 to 65 for guidance on attendance and absence codes for recoding on registers