

# Working together to Improve Attendance Policy

(September 2023)

## Create Learning Trust



(written in line with the DFE's *Working Together to Improve Attendance* August 2023)

Create Learning Trust recognises that the majority of children have 'good' attendance (96% or higher). School staff, leaders, governors and trustees along with our families work together to ensure that their children are happy to come into school.

School non-attendance or lower than expected attendance can impact negatively on children's social and emotional development. There is a direct link between school non-attendance and lower than expected attainment. If a child isn't in school, then they cannot learn with their peers.

Create Learning Trust's schools aim to work closely with families where their child or children have low attendance or are a persistent absentee (90% or lower attendance)

- Senior Leader for the strategic approach to improving attendance; **Mrs Sue Mills (Head Teacher)**
- Member of staff with delegated responsibility for supporting families to improve attendance; **Mrs Margi Ireland (Family Support Worker)**
- Governor who oversees attendance strategy and policy; **Mrs Caroline Percy**
- Members of staff who receive absence calls and chases up any unknown absence; **Mrs Danielle Clarke and Mrs Heather Clarke**

## **The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education** (*Working Together to Improve Attendance* August 2023 Department for 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.

For the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a 'parent' and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

### **How will we support good attendance at Cuddington?**

At Cuddington we will aim to treat any root causes of absence and remove barriers to attendance, at home or in school. Our core values of Respect and Collaborate will ensure we work closely with families to support them when necessary.

At Cuddington, school staff will:

**MONITOR** Rigorously use our school's attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched. *Mrs Ireland will access the school's attendance data on a weekly basis to identify any patterns of low attendance and contact families if necessary.*

**EXPECT** Aspire to high standards of attendance from all children and parents and work within our positive culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn.

**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND** When a pattern is spotted, discuss with children and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

**FACILITATE SUPPORT** Remove barriers in school and help children and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school (*this may include a support and attendance plan*)

**FORMALISE SUPPORT** Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

**ENFORCE** Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education (see Appendix 2)

## Example of the number of days absence and its impact over time

Attendance % over a school year	Equal to number of days absent	Converted to approximate weeks of absence	Weeks of learning lost over 7 years of primary school
95%	9.5	2 weeks	14 weeks
90%	19	4 weeks	28 weeks
80%	38	8 weeks	1 year and 1 month
70%	57	12 weeks	1 year and 8 months

## Informing School about an unexpected absence

- At Cuddington, the start of the school day begins with the **doors opening to children at 8.40am**; the **register is taken at 8.55am**; the **register closes at 9.25am**
- Please **ring school as early as possible** (01270 360030) and leave a message on the absence line; **Name of the child, class they are in and reason for absence**
- If the child remains absent on day 3, then a member of the admin team will call a parent or carer to receive an update as to when it is hoped the child can return to school
- If the child remains absent on day 5 following an unexpected absence, then a member of the admin team will make a further welfare call and raise this absence with our family support worker (Margi Ireland)
- Our family support worker will contact the child's family to offer any support (if needed) – a letter may be sent to families to outline support offered to parents

Please see the link below which answers parents' queries around their child being too ill for school or not;

[Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Medical Absence

Only where the school has a **genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity** of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence. In instances of **long-term or repeated absences for the same reason**, seeking medical evidence may be appropriate to assist in assessing whether the child requires additional support to help them to attend more regularly, and whether the illness is likely to prevent the child from attending for extended periods. If a parent proactively seeks out a note from a GP, it does not imply a need for absence unless this is explicit in their letter.

If a medical absence is likely to be ongoing or long term, then we will offer support in accordance with the school's policies and statutory guidance relating to Children with health needs.

Schools must provide information to the Council about children who are not attending school for reasons of illness, health or otherwise, which is expected to last for 15 school days or more.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>.

For children who have a medical condition and cannot attend school, the school will refer to the Cheshire West and Chester Council's Medical Needs Team.

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/education-and-learning/medical-needs-service/medical-needs-policy-latest.pdf>

Their policy states that referrals must come directly from the child's school and must be supported by medical evidence from one of the following health professionals:

- consultant paediatrician or adolescent psychiatrist
- consultant child psychiatrist
- hospital consultant

Supporting evidence from a General Practitioner alone cannot be accepted.

### **What happens if a child is late?**

Arriving at school late can be quite distressing for a child especially as they have to walk into a full classroom having missed the start of teaching. We would like to stress the importance of arriving in school **BEFORE** At Cuddington, the start of the school day begins with the **doors opening to children at 8.40am**; the **register is taken at 8.55am**; the **register closes at 9.25am**. By which time the child has a 'U' code (**unauthorised absence**).

- Arriving at school after 8.55am is considered 'Late'
- This will be recorded as 'L' on the child's register
- The child with their parent will need to come to the main entrance to gain access to the school
- The parent will need to record the reason for lateness in the electronic 'signing in' system
- The school's admin staff will inform our Family Support Worker of regular 'lateness'

### **What happens if school is not informed of a child's absence**

- A member of the admin team will contact each of the child's emergency contact numbers to determine why the child isn't in school. This will take place by 9.30am
- If we cannot make any contact with a parent/carer, then a member of the admin team will email the parent/carer asking them to contact school immediately
- if there is no reason for absence it would be marked as an unauthorised absence. A home visit will be undertaken by staff after 2 days of no contact

### **Unauthorised Absence and Fixed Penalty Notice**

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

- i. no reason for absence has been given
- ii. medical evidence is not received when requested
- iii. a request for a leave of absence has been unauthorised
- iv. a pupil arrives at school after registration has closed

Parents/carers should be aware that Cuddington Primary School may contact the Local Authority if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences in the current term with a view to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action. The Fixed Penalty Notice is issued individually to each parent/carer who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. The Penalty is £60 per parent/carer per child

if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. Non-payment of the Fixed Penalty Notice may result in prosecution in the Magistrates court (*see appendix 1*).

### **Family Holidays in Term Time**

- Create Learning Trust asks all parents to speak with the Head Teacher BEFORE booking a holiday in term time. A senior leader can then inform parents about the risks linked to taking a holiday in term time and how this will affect their child's attendance and subsequent learning time lost
- A family holiday is not considered an exceptional circumstance for absence. It will be marked as an 'unauthorised' absence and a holiday fine may be issued

**\*For any planned absence (including a family holiday), please call the admin team to arrange a meeting with Mrs Ireland or Mrs Mills**

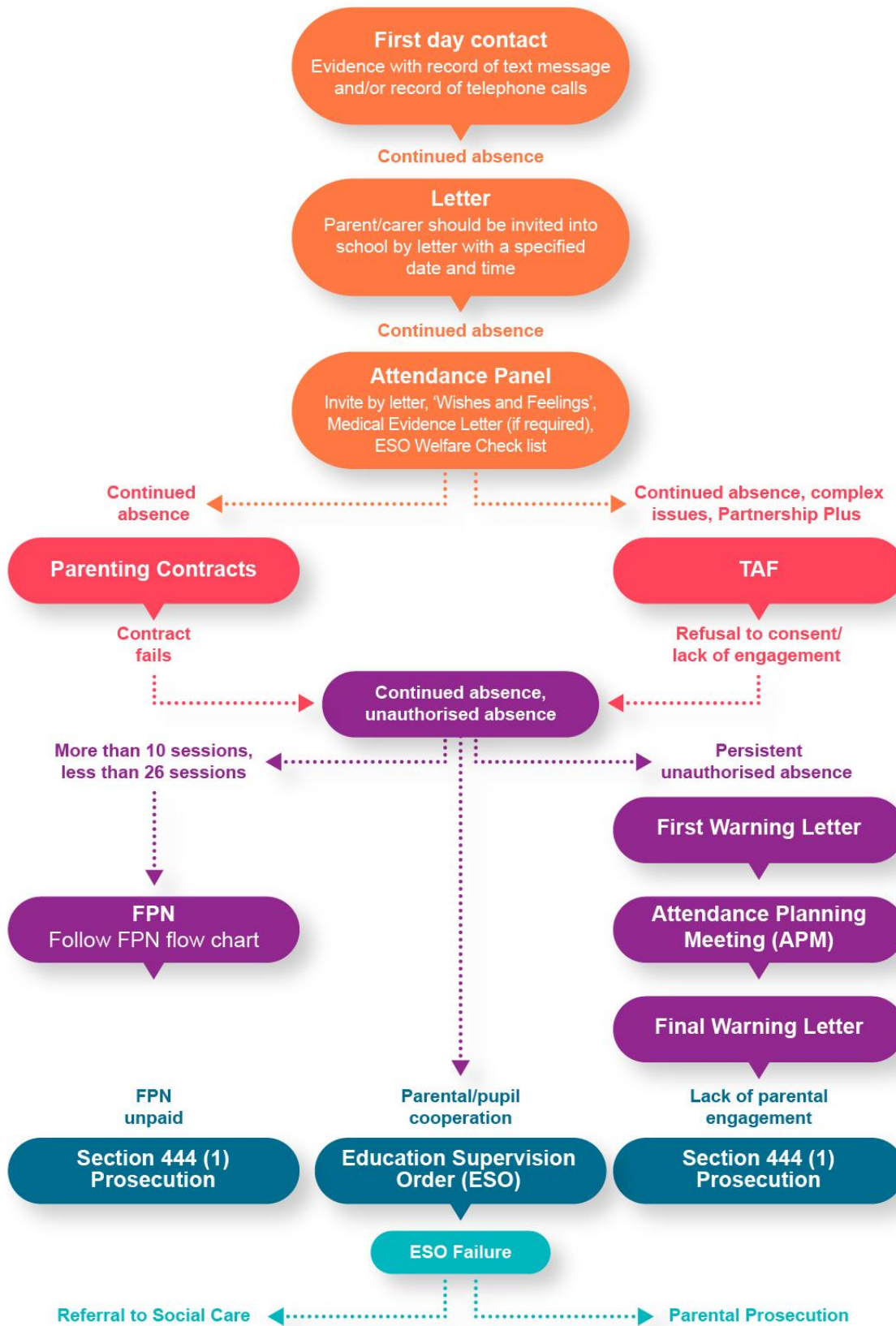
### **Religious Observance**

We recognise that some pupils may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance.

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs

We ask that parents/carers notify Cuddington Primary School in writing in advance where absence is required due to a religious observance.

## Attendance Guidance Flow Chart



Second Offences and severe offences can go to Section 444 (1a) prosecution and will be PACE interviewed.

