MERRIOTT & HASELBURY PLUCKNETT
PRIMARY SCHOOLS FEDERATION

Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation
Attendance Policy

Date ratified by Local Governing Body	7th September 2026
Review Cycle	Every year
Review Date	September 2027
Headteacher	Mrs. Lois Bowery
Chair Local Governance Committee	Mr. Craig Pearce

Key Staff and Contacts for

Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation

Role	Name	Contact details
Attendance Administrator	**Federation School Office**	**01460 72547 or 01460 72833**
Nominated Attendance link Governor	**Mr. Craig Pearce**	**01460 72547**
Designated Safeguarding Lead Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads	**Mrs. Lois Bowery** **Merriott: Mrs. Nicky Taylor** **Haselbury Plucknett: Mrs. Ella Jukes**	**01460 72547 or 01460 72833** **01460 72547** **01460 72833**
Headteacher	**Mrs. Lois Bowery**	**01460 72547 or 01460 72833**

1. Introduction and Background

Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation recognises that positive behaviour and regular attendance are essential in enabling pupils to get the most from their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

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, on time. 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.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities: Working Together to Improve School Attendance. It became statutory on 19 August 2024 and includes a National Framework in relation to absence, how pupils with poor attendance should be supported, and the use of legal sanctions, where necessary. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

This policy aligns with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding,
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled,
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school, and
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued,
- raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality, and
- ensure attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and are at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is the headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

2. Promoting Regular Attendance

At Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and have high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all our pupils from the outset. Regular attendance is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos, and day-to-day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding, and wellbeing.

We have high aspirations and high expectations of all our pupils in all areas of school life, including their attendance. We expect all pupils and their parents to strive for the highest level of attendance possible.

All schools now have a Senior Attendance Champion, who is responsible for overseeing pupil attendance and developing how we support pupils to attend school regularly:

Senior Attendance Champion: Mrs. Lois Bowery
Contact details: 01460 72547/01460 72833

We also have a link governor for attendance, who works with our senior leadership team to monitor and improve attendance across the school:

Link Governor: Mr. Craig Pearce
Contact details: 01460 72547/01460 72833

Other key contacts at the school can be found on page 2 of this policy.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils, and all members of school staff.

To help focus on this, we will:

- submit a daily attendance return to the Department for Education (DfE) in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools,
- build strong relationships and collaborate with pupils and families,
- give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters,
- promote the benefits of high attendance,
- accurately maintain the school admission register,
- accurately maintain the school attendance register,
- have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up pupil absence,
- report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress,
- contact parents/carers if their child's attendance falls below the school's target for attendance.

3. Registration Times and Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Frequent lateness can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others:

If a pupil is late each day by…	…they will miss this many days of teaching…	…and this many lessons over a year
5 minutes	3	15
10 minutes	6	30
15 minutes	9	45
20 minutes	12	60
30 minutes	18	90

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and miss vital information and enrichment opportunities. Research shows that arriving late is one of the lead causes in children experiencing stress and feeling unsettled and embarrassed when they arrive at school.

The table below shows the key timings that all pupils are expected to adhere to:

8.40am	Morning registration starts
8.45am	Morning registers are taken
9.15am	Morning registration closes
1.15pm	Afternoon registers are taken
3.15pm	End of the school day

Pupils arriving after 8.45am must go directly to registration. If they arrive after the register has been taken, they will be marked as late with the L code.

Pupils arriving after 8.55am must go to the school office to sign in and provide a reason for their lateness. This information will be recorded on their attendance record, and they will be marked as late with the L code.

In line with statutory guidance our registers will close at 9.15am.

Pupils arriving after 9.15am must go to the school office to sign in and provide a reason for their lateness. This information will be recorded on their attendance record, and **they will be marked as late with the U code**. The U code shows that the pupil has attended school but is classed as an unauthorised absence for statistical purposes

If a pupil is frequently marked as late with either the L code or the U code, we will contact their parent/carer to discuss the matter and identify any barriers that may require support.

If a pupil is regularly marked as late with the U code, we will follow the process for pupils with regular unauthorised absence. Support will be offered, where it is needed, but continued unauthorised absences may lead to the Local Authority putting legal sanctions into place.

Parents/carers are always encouraged to contact our team to discuss any concerns about lateness and how improvements can be achieved.

4. Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

For all pupils, attendance is marked twice every day, the school is open to pupils: at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Every session that a pupil is absent must be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**.

Parents/carers are required to provide information relating to all absences to ensure these decisions can be made accurately, and to ensure each child's register reflects their story and any barriers to attendance. Stating that the child is "unwell" is not sufficient, as a specific reason is required to be recorded on the register.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. In certain cases, we may ask for medical evidence before we are able to make the decision to authorise an absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable or unavoidable, or for which permission has not been given. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, but is not limited to:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily (e.g., because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn),
- absences that are not properly explained by the parent/carer,
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked as late using a U code (this shows that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, but counts as an absence for that session),
- day trips or shopping trips,
- looking after other children or children going with siblings or parents to medical appointments,
- their own or family birthdays,
- holidays taken during term time that have not been authorised,

- any other leave of absence in term time that has not been agreed.

5. Persistent and Severe Absence

A pupil becomes a **persistent absentee** when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason, whether absences are authorised or not.

Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are persistent absentees.

A pupil becomes **severely absent** when their attendance falls below 50%. Pupils within this group may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

An attendance level of…	…means a pupil will miss this many days…	…and this many lessons
100%	0	0
95%	10	50
90%	19	95
80%	39	195
50%	95	475

6. Absence Procedures

Parents/carers are expected to inform the school if their child is not – or will not be – in school for any reason. To do this, all parents should contact:

The relevant School Office or send a message via Schoolcomms.

We monitor and review all pupil absences, and the reasons provided.

If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

1. Ensure your parent/carer and emergency contact information is up to date on our system. You can inform us of any changes by contacting the School Office.

2. Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.15am (the time we close our registers) providing your child's details and the reason for their absence.

3. Contact the school on every further day of absence before 9.15am providing your child's details and the reasons for their ongoing absence.

4. Minimise absence by ensuring your child returns to school as soon as possible. In some cases, your child may be well enough to come into school later in the day.

5. Provide any further information to support your child's absence if requested by our team.

   We may request medical evidence if your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When deciding whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained with NHS guidance on illness and school attendance.

If your child is absent, we will:

1. Telephone or message you via Schoolcomms on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if you have failed to inform us of the reason for your child's absence.

2. If we are unable to contact you by telephone or Schoolcomms, we will telephone emergency contact numbers and send letters home. In the interests of safeguarding all our pupils, a home visit may also be conducted.

3. A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the tenth consecutive day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), and we are unable to verify your whereabouts. At this point your child will be a Child Missing from Education (CME).

If your child's absence continues, we will:

- send you letters outlining our concerns and expectations, and offering support,
- arrange a meeting with you to discuss any barriers and understand how we can overcome them,
- create a personalised plan, such as an attendance contract, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child,
- provide additional support in school to improve attendance,
- offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate
- refer the matter to the Local Authority for further support or relevant legal sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

7. Understanding Barriers to Regular Attendance

We have high expectations of all our pupils but also recognise that irregular school attendance is often an early indicator that a child needs additional support. While the most common cause of absence is illness, there can be underlying issues that are impacting a child's ability or willingness to attend regularly.

Any barriers preventing regular attendance need to be identified as quickly as possible and resolved through collaboration between the school, the parents, and the child. We will collaborate with our pupils and their family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support.

Where needed, we will seek the support of outside agencies to support a child to get into school regularly. This may include services such as: School Nursing, Parent and Family Support Advisors (PFSAs) or Family Intervention Service (FIS) Practitioners. In some cases, it may be appropriate to collaborate with Children's Social Care or specialist health services to understand, and break down, barriers to good attendance.

Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Child (TAC) or Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed, with school attendance playing a key role.

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, or other complex needs or vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for all these pupils; however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We will discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

In line with statutory guidance, schools must submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed, or are likely to miss, 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons or illness.

Summary tables of responsibilities for school attendance can be found here: Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

We actively encourage all parents/carers to be proactive in seeking support for their child to ensure their regular attendance. You can reach our team using the contact details on page 2 of this policy and our processes for addressing concerns around attendance are outlined in the Attendance Concerns Pathway (Appendix B)

8. Safeguarding and Attendance

Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures.

However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional and sometime significant safeguarding issues, where absence may place pupils at additional risk.

In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases to the relevant authorities.

As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school, when the school has made all reasonable enquiries, cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare and safety.
A copy of our Safeguarding Policy can be found on each of our Federation School's website.

9. Working with the Local Authority

Parents, schools, governing bodies and the local authorities all have legal duties to ensure all children access a suitable, full-time education. This includes working together to support regular attendance.

Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation works closely with Somerset Council to promote and support regular attendance, and to take the relevant action when needed:

- Regular attendance data sharing for all pupils in line with statutory guidance
- Requests for penalty notices, where a pupil's unauthorised absence meets the national threshold and the Somerset Penalty Notice Code of Conduct applies
- Requests for support from services across the Authority, including health services and Somerset Council
- Requests for attendance support, where our efforts to support a child's improved attendance have not been successful, or where we feel the use of legal interventions or other statutory support may be appropriate.

Parents/carers are expected and encouraged to work with the school and Local Authority to address any attendance concerns. They are also encouraged to actively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is usually successful.

If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school should consider requesting formal attendance support or legal action.

We will always work with parents/carers and children to support regular attendance, but where this is not possible, Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation is able to request attendance support from the Local Authority without parental consent.

10. School Attendance and the Law

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education. All parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, which introduced a National Framework in England.

10.1. Duties and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of parents, schools, governing bodies and local authorities are laid out in the statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance, which is underpinned by the following legislation:

- The Education Act 1996
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Children Act 1989
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007
- Keeping Children Safe in Education

A breakdown of these duties can be found here:

Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation will work continuously with pupils, parents, the local authority and other partners to ensure we all continue to fulfil our statutory duties and support pupils as fully as possible.

10.2. Definition of Regular Attendance

In 2017, the Supreme Court ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

In 2024, paragraph 11 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance further clarifies the definition of regular attendance as follows:

> *A 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.*

Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation expects all pupils to attend school every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable and unavoidable circumstances, as defined in Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

10.3. Definition of Parent

Under education law, a child's "parent" is defined differently than under family law.
Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred biological parent) but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part-time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

10.4. National Framework for Penalty Notices

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 gives schools and local authorities the power to prosecute parents when they have failed to ensure the regular attendance of their child at their registered school. Penalty notices can be used to give parents the opportunity to discharge their liability for this offence without being prosecuted.

All schools are required to consider whether a penalty notice would be appropriate where a child's absence from school meets the national threshold, which is defined in Working Together to Improve School Attendance:

- Where a child has ten or more unauthorised sessions of absence (usually equivalent to five days) on their register in a rolling ten school week period, schools are required to consider whether a penalty notice would be an appropriate tool to improve their attendance.

- The sessions of unauthorised absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of unauthorised absence codes, including unauthorised lateness and unauthorised term-time holidays.

- The rolling ten school week period can span different school terms, different school years and different educational settings.

- Penalty notices can be issued to each parent individually, and in relation to each child whose absence has met the national threshold. Each penalty notice is for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

- If a second penalty notice is issued within a three-year period, the reduced rate does not apply.

- A parent cannot be issued with more than two penalty notices in relation to a child within a three-year period. Where this happens, the Local Authority is required to consider alternative sanctions, which may include prosecution.

Penalty notices and other sanctions are used, where appropriate, to improve a child's attendance and to protect their legal right to a full-time, suitable education.

10.5. Term-Time Leave

All children have a legal right to suitable, full-time education. There is no entitlement for children to have time off from school during term-time for the purposes of a holiday, recreational or protest activity.

The Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools:

- all references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed, including the removal of the H code for approved leave,
- headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances",
- Headteachers do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation expects all pupils to attend regularly. As such, any requests for term-time leave will be considered but only approved if the reasons and circumstances for that leave are exceptional and unavoidable. This decision rests with the headteacher.

All requests for term-time leave must be submitted by completing a request form via Microsoft Forms. To obtain the link, please contact your child's school office, who will provide this to you.

Any requests for leave that are not authorised will result in those absences being marked as unauthorised on the child's register.

Any leave taken during term-time without being requested will be unauthorised.

All unauthorised leave will be recorded on the child's register using the G code. Where those unauthorised absences hit the national threshold, Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation will normally submit a penalty notice request to the Local Authority. Penalty notices may be issued to any parent/carer that the school believes enabled their child to take the leave from school.

Term-time leave cannot be authorised retrospectively for any reason other than to correct an administrative error (e.g., where the holiday had been authorised by the headteacher but miscoded).

While it is not possible to provide a definitive list of exceptional circumstances, the following is a guide that Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation will use to make decisions based on the reasons for the request being made:

- the request is rare, or a one-off, significant, and unavoidable,
- the request is of unique and significant emotional, educational, or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs any loss of teaching time (as determined by the headteacher),
- the request is unavoidable and could not be reasonably scheduled during school holidays.

Headteachers will liaise over decisions when there are siblings in other Quantock Education Trust (QET) schools.

If a parent/carer reports their child as absent for reasons of illness (or otherwise) but there is reasonable evidence that those absences where for a holiday or recreational purposes, those absences may be unauthorised, and a penalty notice is likely to be requested if the national threshold is met. In these cases, parents will be contacted for further information in advance of this decision being taken.

In rare cases, requests for term-time leave may be authorised. When this happens, Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation will not provide any work for the child to complete during their absence.

10.6. Maintaining the School Admissions Register

The admission register (sometimes referred to as the school roll) 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.

The school will enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed with, or been notified by the parent, that the pupil will attend.

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.

It is vital that the admission register is accurate and up to date. Therefore, we encourage parents to inform the school of any changes whenever they occur and ensure the admission register is amended as soon as possible.

10.7. Using Data to Improve Attendance

Any absence affects the pattern and rhythm of a child's education and regular absence may seriously affect their learning.

The Department for Education (DfE) defines persistent absence as a pupil missing 10% or more schooling across the school year, for any reason.

Where a pupil misses 50% or more of their schooling, they are severely absent.

Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation will ensure that data is routinely monitored to identify emerging attendance issues and will seek to prevent any pupil becoming persistently or severely absent using a support-first approach. This will include:

- identifying the individual needs of pupils and barriers to attendance,
- working closely with pupils, their families and wider support services to remove barriers to attendance,
- a formalised approach in conjunction with the Local Authority and, where appropriate,
- consideration of statutory frameworks to protect pupils' right to education.

In line with statutory guidance, Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett Primary Schools Federation will regularly monitor attendance data to ensure the following children and groups are identified and appropriately supported:

- Pupils at risk of being persistently absent (attendance is approaching 90%)
- Pupils that are persistently absent (attendance is below 90%)
- Pupils that are severely absent (attendance is below 50%)
- Pupils with lower attendance than their peers
- Pupils with SEND or medical conditions
- Pupils that have a social worker
- Pupils that are, or have been, a Child Looked After (CLA)
- Pupils that have missed more than 15 whole days of attendance

Further information is provided on the table of responsibilities that can be found here: Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

All schools are also required to submit pupils' attendance data to the Local Authority and the DfE on a regular basis. This supports our collective efforts to understand attendance patterns and work together to improve school attendance.

Appendix A – The QET Support-First Approach to Attendance

Attendance	Level	Days missed in a year	Lessons missed in a year	Intervention	Link to DfE Guidance
97 – 100%	Excellent attendance – all pupils should aim to be in this group	**Up to 5 days**	**Up to 25**	Termly, annual recognition through school systems and processes.	**Expect**
96 – 96.9%	Expected attendance	**Up to 7 days**	**Up to 35**	Improved attendance also recognised.	**Monitor**
94 - 95.9%	Falling below expected attendance	**Up to 11.5 days**	**Up to 57**	School will work with parents to support improved attendance, through the QET Attendance Concerns Pathway.	**Listen and Understand**
90.1 – 93.9%	Below expected attendance – risk of underachievement increases as attendance falls	**Up to 18 days**	**Up to 90**	School will work with parents to support improved attendance, through the QET Attendance Concerns Pathway and may seek to involve external agencies.	**Facilitate Support**
51% - 90%	Attendance below this level is classed as **Persistent Absence** and will seriously increase the risk of underachievement	**19 days or more**	**95 or more**	School will seek to involve external agencies including the Education Engagement Service. Where efforts to improve attendance have not been successful, legal intervention including Penalty Notices and Prosecution will be considered.	**Formalise Support**
50% or below	Attendance below this level is classed as **Severe Absence** and will substantially increase the risk of underachievement. Pupils at this level are more likely to find it difficult to be in, or return to, school.	**95 days or more**	**475 or more**	School will work closely with external agencies including the Education Engagement Service and, where appropriate, Children's Social Care, where ongoing severe unauthorised absence is likely to constitute neglect. Legal intervention including Penalty Notices and Prosecutions will be considered.	**Enforce**

Appendix B – QET Attendance Concerns Pathway

QET Attendance Concerns Pathway	
Attendance drops (Expect and Monitor)	Any drop in your child's attendance will be picked up through each school's monitoring systems and may result in a conversation with you. This is a supportive gesture and can be shared with your child to reiterate the importance of excellent attendance. Repeated drops in attendance and any early concerns within the first half term of the academic year will be followed up to identify any potential issues.
Level 1 (Listen and Understand)	You will receive **a letter** if there are concerns and your child's attendance falls below 96% *after the first half term of the academic year.* This is intended as a further supportive gesture providing you with information that can be shared with your child to improve attendance in school.
Level 2 (Facilitate)	If your child's attendance continues to cause concern, you will receive a **second letter**. Over the next two weeks we will expect to see full attendance in school and, thereafter, they will be continually monitored until it is above 96%. **If specific concerns exist or there is a history of poor attendance, this step will be missed and you will be asked to attend a meeting with a senior member of staff.**
Level 3 (Formalise)	Your child's attendance is now becoming a serious cause for concern. You will be invited to an attendance meeting with a senior member of staff via **a third letter**, to discuss how your child's attendance can be improved. This will include an Attendance Contract / Attendance Improvement Plan with specific targets. A review date will be set to avoid escalation to Level 4. If your child has periods of unauthorised absence, the school may issue a **Notice to Improve.** If there are no absences during the stated number of weeks, no Penalty Notice will be requested, If there are unauthorised absences in the timeframe stated on the Notice to Improve, a Penalty Notice will be requested.
Level 4 (Enforce)	The school may make a referral to the Education Engagement Service due to one or both of the following: • Failure to engage in attendance meeting/s or relevant contact with a senior member of staff. • Attendance review period failed There are a number of statutory options for Education Engagement involvement. In all cases the parent(s) /carer(s) will be kept informed, usually by a letter from the school outlining the proposed option. These could include: **Penalty Notice (PN)** - The parent(s)/carer(s) responsible for the child's regular school attendance will have 21 days to pay this £80 per parent, per child fine, after which it goes up to £160 per parent, per child. Subsequent fines increase in line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices – please see Appendix D. **Prosecution** - could lead to fines up to £2,500 and the parent having a criminal record (please see Appendix D for information relating to the National Framework for Penalty Notices. At any point, if there are safeguarding concerns linked to ongoing unauthorised absence, the school will follow the process for referral to wider agencies, including Children's Social Care, to intensify support, where appropriate.

Appendix C – Term Time Leave Request ***(All requests for term-time leave must be submitted by completing this request form via Microsoft Forms)***

Term Time Leave Request Form		
Name of child:	**Class / Tutor:**	
Inclusive Dates of Request for Term Time Leave	**From:**	**To:**
Exceptional Circumstances (please see the guidance document on the back of this form and ensure that supporting evidence is provided).		
Term time leave has also been requested for the following child(ren): **Name:** **School:** **Name:** **School:**		
Signed (Parent / Carer):		**Date:**

Term time leave will only be authorised when an application meets the **Exceptional Circumstances** criteria, outlined in the Attendance Policy and the Guidance Flowchart**. Government guidance states that "As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday."** Further information will be considered **if the headteacher agrees that an application meets the Exceptional Circumstances criteria**.

This will include:

- The date of the request and the amount of notice provided
- The overall attendance of the child (ren) and whether this is at or above expected level
- The time / duration of the request and whether it is within the first term of the academic year or of any new school placement, or it affects exams or the period leading up to exams
- Whether the child has had any term time leave within the current or previous academic year

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS / CARERS:

- Parents / carers whose children are on a school register have a duty to ensure that their children attend regularly and if they fail to do so they may be guilty of an offence under the Education Act, 1993.
- If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. **This may result in a Penalty Notice being issued or legal action taken for poor attendance.**

For school use only:

Current attendance:	97% - 100%	Excellent Attendance	
	96% - 96.9%	Expected Attendance	
	94% - 95.9%	Falling Below Expected	
	90.1% – 93.9%	Below Expected	
	90% or below	Persistent Absence	
	50% or below	Severe Absence	
Attendance history:	Year:	Year:	Year:

Authorised ☐ Unauthorised ☐

We will continue to monitor attendance and may require evidence following any term time absence.

Signed (Headteacher): Date:

Appendix D – Information for Parents About Penalty Notices

Information for Parents about Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence from School

Following the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised absences recorded after 19 August 2024. This information refers to penalty notices that are considered for irregular attendance and unauthorised term-time leave.

All penalty notices are issued within the Somerset Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

Who can be fined?

Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer of each child whose unauthorised absence meets the national threshold.

For example, in a family with two parents and three children taking unauthorised term-time leave, each parent could receive a penalty notice for each child absent from school, resulting in six penalty notices being issued.

The National Threshold

Schools are required to consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate when a child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. 10 sessions would typically be the equivalent of five days.

These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be a combination of any unauthorised absence codes (G, O, N or U).

The rolling ten school week period can span terms, school years and schools.

The First Offence

The first time a parent is issued with a penalty notice in relation to a child's absence, they will be able to pay the reduced amount of £80 if they pay within 21 days, otherwise the full amount of £160 is payable within 28 days.

The Second Offence

If a parent is issued with a second penalty notice within three years the amount payable will be £160 within 28 days. The reduced amount will not be available.

The Third Offence

If a parent becomes eligible for a third (or more) penalty notice within three years of the first being issued, a penalty notice cannot be issued and the Local Authority will consider other measures to address attendance concerns. This may include prosecution, which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and the parent having a criminal record. If convicted, the offence will also show on any future DBS checks.

Not Paying a Penalty Notice

Penalty notices are only issued to parents when they have committed the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

A penalty notice gives the parent the chance to write the offence off without needing to go to court.

It is not an offence not to pay a penalty notice, but the Local Authority may then prosecute the parent for the original offence.

The Law

Penalty notices are issued in line with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 when a parent has failed to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

Penalty notices can only be issued when:

- ✓ A child's absence meets the national threshold
- ✓ Support has been attempted (if appropriate)
- ✓ Issuing a penalty notice is compliant with the Somerset Penalty Notice Code of Conduct

Appendix E – Additional Resources to Support Attendance

Guidance for Parents on School Attendance

Here, the Children's Commissioner provides information and resources to support parents with school attendance and school applications.

Visit the guidance for parents on school attendance website.

Is my Child too ill for School?

This website supports parents to understand whether their child is too unwell to go to school, including things to look out for, basic health advice and links to further information.

Visit Is my Child too ill for School on the NHS website.

Supporting Absence as a Result of Illness

This document outlines how you can work with schools and other agencies to support a child that is absent due to illness.

Open this PDF document on the Children's Commissioner website.

Somerset Early Help Assessment

This document can – and should – be used to support children and families experiencing significant barriers to attendance.

Open this Word document on the Professional Choices website.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance

This statutory guidance outlines how parents, schools and local authorities should work together to support children and their families.

Open this PDF document on the Department for Education website.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance

This website provides support, training and advice for parents whose children are experiencing emotionally based school avoidance.

Visit the Somerset website for Emotionally Based School Avoidance

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Connect Somerset

The Connect Somerset partnership provides a huge amount of information about the support available in your community and how to access it.

Visit the Connect Somerset website for local support and information.

Appendix F – Attendance Codes and Definitions

The table below shows all attendance and absence codes available to schools. All schools are required to mark every child's register twice a day using the appropriate code.

New codes have been introduced for September 2024, most notably the updated C1 and C2 codes, codes Y1 to Y7 and the K code.

✓ = Yes ✗ = No – = Not applicable (codes that do not count towards a child's attendance)

Code	Definition	Present	Authorised
/	Present (morning session)	✓	✓
\	Present (afternoon session)	✓	✓
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	✓	✓
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance	✗	✓
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	✗	✓
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable	✗	✓
D	Dual registered at another school	✓	✓
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	✗	✓
G	Holiday not granted by the school	✗	✗
I	Illness	✗	✓
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	✓	✓
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	✓	✓
L	Late arrival before the register is closed	✓	✓
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment	✗	✓
N	Reason for absence not yet established	✗	✗
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	✗	✗
P	Participating in a sporting activity	✓	✓
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	–	–

Code	Definition	Present	Authorised
R	Religious Observance	✗	✓
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination	✗	✓
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	✗	✓
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	✗	✗
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	✓	✓
W	Attending work experience	✓	✓
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	–	–
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	–	–
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	–	–
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	–	–
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	–	–
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	–	–
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	–	–
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	–	–
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	–	–
#	Planned whole school closure (e.g. school holidays, INSET days)	–	–

Deleted Codes
From September 2024 the following codes are no longer available and must not be used:

- H code – all authorised term-time must now be coded with the C code
- J code – replaced by J1
- Y code – replaced by Y1 to Y7

Use of the B Code

The Department for Education has clarified that the B code can only be used when a pupil is taking part in an approved educational activity and that they are physically supervised by an adult considered by the school to have the appropriate skills, training and knowledge.

Use of the Q Code
The Q code can only be used when a child is unable to attend because the local authority is responsible for arranging school transport and this has not yet been set up. Where local authority transport has been set up but fails (e.g. a taxi does not arrive or the bus breaks down), the Y1 code must be used.