LIONHEART
EDUCATIONAL
TRUST

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy applies to all schools within the Lionheart Educational Trust

Approved by the Trust

September 2026 – September 2028

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This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and draws from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

Whilst every pupil has a right to a full-time education and we have high attendance expectations for all pupils, we will ensure that the policy is applied fairly and consistently whilst considering the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. In implementing this policy, we will take into consideration our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

admissions
anti-bullying
safeguarding

Section 1: Statement of Intent

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We want every child to:

- Attend regularly
- Attend punctually
- Attend ready and prepared to learn including wearing the right uniform and bringing the correct equipment

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

Our goal is for all pupils to achieve the highest possible attendance. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that they are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

Good attendance 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 4. 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) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities

Attendance is everyone's responsibility. If children are not attending, they are not learning and this can affect their sense of school belonging, engagement and well-being. Working in partnership is the best way all stakeholders can ensure good attendance.

Responsibilities of the Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Responsibilities of the school's attendance champion

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. In Riverside Primary School the named attendance champion is Jo Robinson.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of classroom staff/form tutor

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance champion on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of pupils

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the reception desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the tutor/class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Section 3: Recording Attendance

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

The school will open at 08:40
Pupils must arrive in school by 08:50 on each school day.
The register for the first session will be taken at 08:50 and will be kept open until 09:20. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:00 and will be kept open until 13:30.

The register will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 08:50 and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time**.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U*. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded *M*. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentist's appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.**

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved.

If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school may issue parents with a Penalty Notice.

Section 4: Reporting Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Attendance is monitored daily: Absence codes are reviewed each morning to identify pupils requiring immediate follow-up. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed of attendance concerns where absence may indicate a safeguarding risk.

First day absence

If your child is absent you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and communicated in writing (e-mail or letter) on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us or you can call into school and report to reception. If your child is absent we will:

- telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- invite you in to discuss the situation with our attendance officer / assistant headteacher if absences persist

Where a child is on a child in need plan or looked after contact will be made with the relevant social worker on day 1.

Third day absence

Parents must ring in on the third day of absence to speak to the attendance officer and not just inform the school via email or text.

Please note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school we will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family. At this point we will carry out a home visit to ensure the well-being of the child.

Tenth day absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is *at risk of missing*. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. It would be helpful if you could ensure that we always have an up-to-date contact number.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Pupils with attendance below 50% are classified as severely absent and will receive intensive support.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. Any student who is persistently absent will be monitored and put on an action plan, if required. The Assistant Headteacher or an Education Welfare Officer will meet with students, and their families whose attendance cause concern. Where necessary, home visits are made to discuss ways attendance could be improved and the barriers that may need removing:

This could include:

- Agreeing an attendance support plan
- Offering further pastoral care
- Signposting to outside agencies
- Further meetings with the Education Welfare Officer to assess progress

In situations of persistent truanting, a parent / carer may be fined. Penalty notices will be issued in line with the national framework introduced by the Department for Education (2024), including thresholds, escalation, and limits on repeat fines.

A welcome back

It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils. Include details of how catch-up work will be organised.

Section 5: Requesting a Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office) in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds the parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code.

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

Section 6: Understanding Types of Absence

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

- authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. See appendix 2 for examples of authorised absences other than illness or medical/dental appointments.
- unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
    - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
    - truancy before or during the school day
    - absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

If the authenticity of an illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Section 7: Supporting Attendance

Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

The school adopts a 'support first' approach. We will work with pupils, parents and external agencies to understand and remove barriers to attendance before considering enforcement action.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance on our website
- report to you regularly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments

- to share current attendance through the beehive app/portal
- celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- reward good or improving attendance through class competitions and certificates
- set targets for the school and display these in the school
- provide a breakfast club

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

School strategies for supporting attendance

As a school we encourage good attendance through a range of strategies including:

- Letters to parents to stress the importance of good attendance
- Individual certificates presented termly where full attendance (100%) has been gained.
- Celebrate 100% Attendance via letters to parents
- Weekly class attendance shared with all children and through the attendance league
- End of half term golden time to be rewarded to the class who achieve the highest attendance
- 100% attendance badges
- Ensuring that good attendance is high profile in school through sharing weekly data in celebration assemblies and with class teachers

When attendance falls below expected levels for the school the following early interventions will take place:

1. Courtesy letter to inform that attendance has fallen below the schools target of 97%
2. Medical Letter (if absence is due to consistent illness)
3. Second letter of concern as their attendance has continued to fall below 97% and is now being monitored by school and the attendance team
4. Class teacher weekly monitoring
5. Use of individual attendance plans where appropriate
6. EBSA screening/mental health screening where appropriate
7. Complete early help referrals
8. Promote multi-agency working

Section 8: Legal Measures for Tackling Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

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

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

The Lionheart Education Trust will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. the child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. the child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures may be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Attendance contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- a number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- one-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- if the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

Section 9: Use of Data

Pupils' attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a learner's attendance is a cause for concern in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. On a regular basis the Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance, in conjunction with the Attendance Officer and Trust Data Team will provide the following data:

Data	**Regularity**	**Provided to**
Daily registers	Daily	Class Teachers
Weekly registers	Weekly	Class Teachers
Individual learner % attendance data	Weekly	Head of School
3+ day absence	Weekly	Head of School
Less than 95% attendance lists	Weekly	EWO / Head of School

Class % attendance	Weekly	EWO / Head of School
Persistent Absence/Severe Absence learners identified from 'sessions missed' data	Weekly	EWO / Head of School
Attendance data broken down into key groups i/c PA and SA	Monthly	SLT

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups. Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if their attendance is a cause for concern.

Section 10: Key Contacts

Include school contact details for reporting absence – the dfe states that the following needs to be included:

- Attendance strategic Lead – Mrs J Robinson (Assistant Head) 0116 2107373
- To report daily absence or attendance issues please contact the school office – 0116 2107373 / office@riversideacademy.org.uk

Appendix 1: Absence Codes

Attending the school	
/ \	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered at another school
Absent – Leave of absence	
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
Absent – other authorised reasons	
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes	
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
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
Absent – unauthorised absence	
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Arrived in school after registration closed
Administrative Codes	
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure

Appendix 2: Other Types of Absence

Religious observance

Where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Removal of a Child from School

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the junior school/secondary school or leaving at the end of Year 11 parents are asked to:

1. Give the attendance team comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing
2. Arrange a meeting to discuss home education. We strongly discourage parents from this option and would aim to work with you to keep your child in school

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as *C*, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

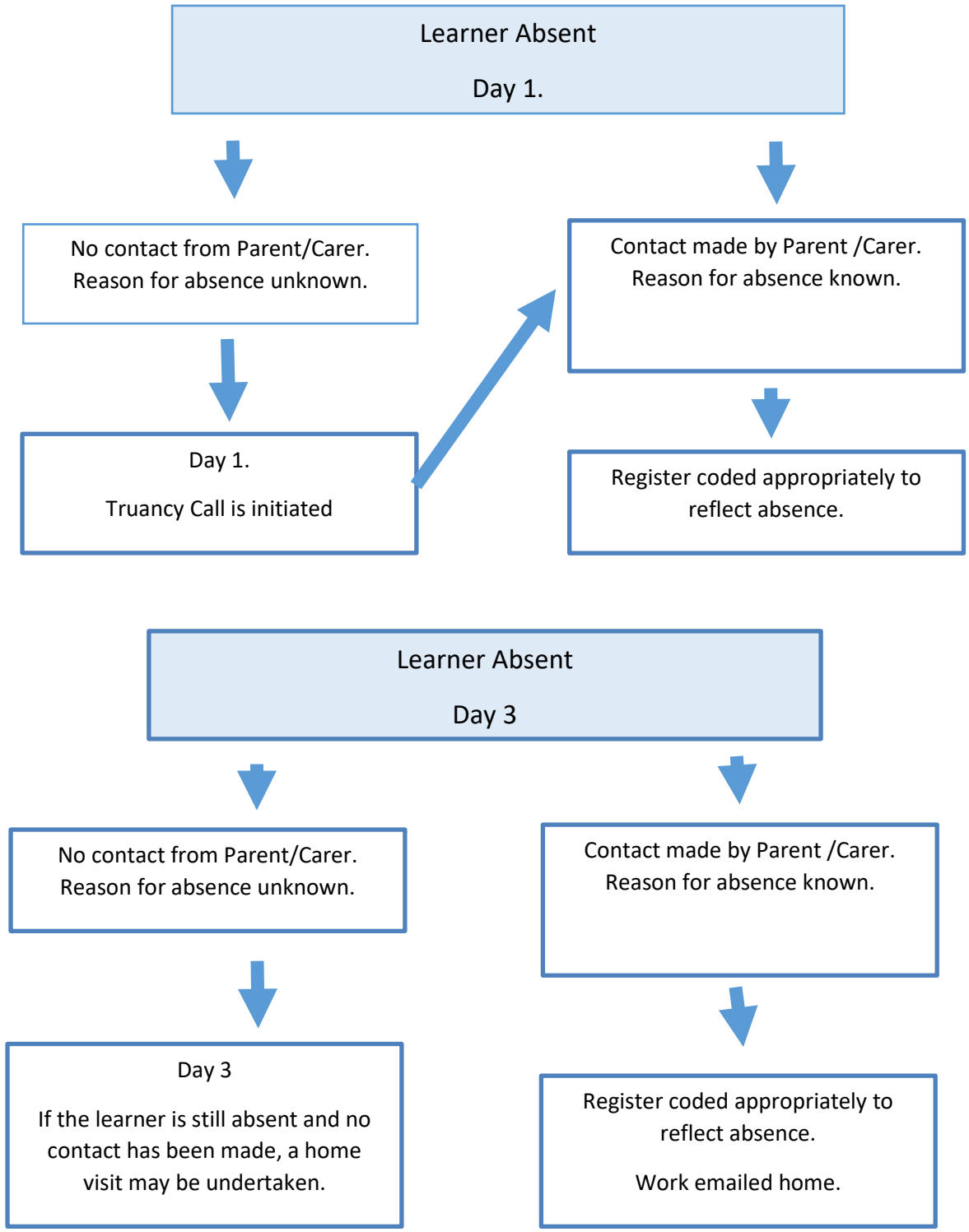
Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the *T* code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

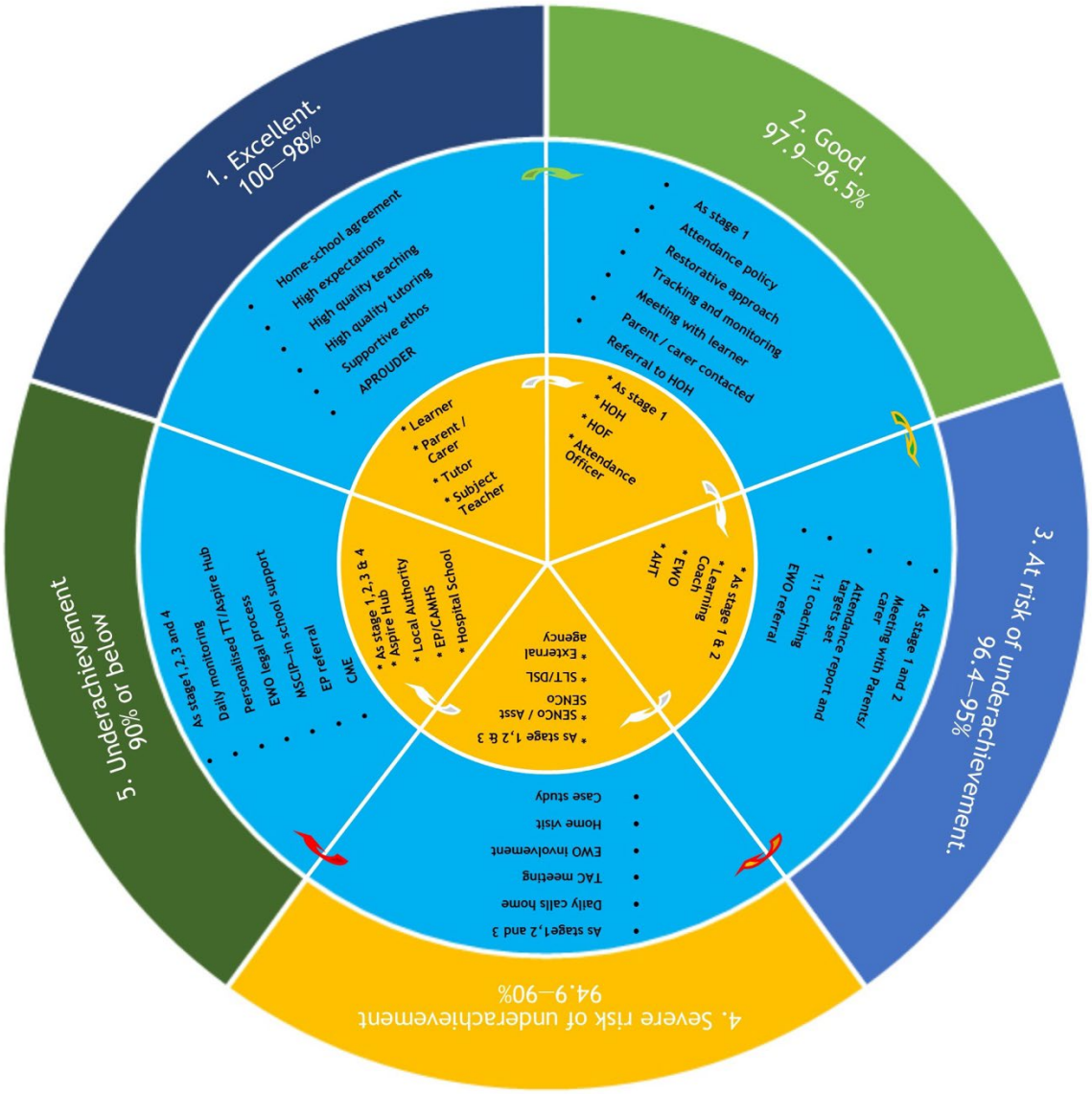
Teenage pregnancy

Support will be directed to keeping a pupil in school and, wherever possible, her return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Appendix 3: Attendance Flow Diagram



Appendix 4: Attendance Matters



This is not an exhaustive list of interventions to support learners with attendance issues. Appropriate interventions, involvement from key staff and external agencies will be based in individual need and circumstances.

The outer (blue, green and yellow) section outlines attendance % and is scaled from 1 – excellent to 5 – underachievement.

The inner (blue) section outlines policy, possible actions, monitoring and interventions.

The central (yellow) section indicates possible staff and agency involvement.

We will use the following thresholds in reporting to parents:

98% and above	Excellent
96.5-97.9%	Good
95-96.4%	Satisfactory
90-94.9%	Cause for Concern
Below 90%	Unacceptable

Please see the chart below which shows how absence impacts attendance:

Every School Day Counts		
Attendance during the school year	**Equates to days absent**	**Which is approximately**
96%	6 days	1 week
94%	10 days	2 weeks
90%	19 days	4 weeks
85%	29 days	6 weeks
80%	38 days	8 weeks
75%	48 days	10 weeks
70%	57 days	11.5 weeks
65%	67 days	13.5 weeks