



Policy Information Sheet

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		responsibility moved from principal to CEO	

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- **Statement of intent**

Hartlepool Free School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

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

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

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

The school's attendance champion is Sarah Harrington and the school attendance team are based in our school office, and can be contacted via 01429 450081. Staff, parents and pupils will be expected to contact the attendance office for queries or concerns about attendance.

1. Legal framework

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

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- DfE 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE 'Children missing education'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE)'
- DfE 'Providing remote education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Policy
- Children Missing/Absent from Education Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Administration of Medicine Policy
- SEN Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy

2. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

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

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave;
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave;
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave;
- An absence due to a family emergency;

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason;
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Arrival at school after the register has closed;
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed;

- Leaving school for no reason during the day;

Persistent absence (PA):

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

Serious Absence (SA):

- Missing more than 50% of schooling across the year for any reason;

Missing education

- Not registered at a school and not receiving suitable education in a setting other than a school;

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Trust board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school;
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies;

The Principal and CEO are responsible for:

- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role;
- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals;
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation;
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy;
- Having regard to KCSIE when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated;
- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school;
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance champion role;
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures;
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence;

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too;
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently;
- Modelling good attendance behaviour;
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated;

- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day;
- Taking action where a student is identified as having any attendance concerns, this information is provided weekly at the weekly RAG meeting;

The attendance champion is responsible for:

- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school;
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance;
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions;
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement;
- Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance;
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance;
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers;

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details;
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number;
- Updating the school if their details change;
- The attendance of their children at school;
- Promoting good attendance with their children;

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school;
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school;

4. Attendance expectations

The school has high expectations for pupil's attendance and punctuality, and will ensure that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to:

- Attend school every day they are required to be at school, for the full day;
- Attend school punctually;
- Attend every timetabled lesson;

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

- The morning register will be marked by **10.00am**. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time. Pupils attending after this time will receive a mark to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark;
- The morning register will close at 10.00am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time;
- The afternoon register will be marked by 1:30pm. The afternoon register will close at 1:30pm. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present;

5. Absence procedures

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

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by the close of the morning register to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent via telephone call as soon as is practicable on the first day that the pupil does not attend school. If the school are unable to contact parents, a home visit will be conducted to ensure the safety of the pupils, and remind parents of the expectations of contact with school. Where there is no response, a letter will be left at the home asking parent to get in touch, and stating that if they have not contacted school by the end of the school day, there will potentially be a follow up welfare check requested via school, the police or social care.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

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

In the case of PA, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the attendance champion. The school will inform the LA, on a termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 85 percent, the attendance champion will arrange a formal meeting with the pupil and their parent.

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

The attendance reporting structure will be as follows:

1. School office
2. Attendance champion
3. DSL
4. Principal

6. Attendance register

The school uses Arbour to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

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

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- # = Planned whole or partial school closure
- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school
- H = Authorised holiday
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- S = Study leave
- T = Traveller absence
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- N = Reason not yet provided
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- D = Dual registered at another educational establishment
- B = Off-site education activity
- J = At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- V = Educational visit or trip
- W = Work experience
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

Pupils who are absent from school but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register, unless a programme of home tuition either partly or fully has been agreed.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

7. Authorising parental absence requests

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

Leave of absence

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents to contact the head of school prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the head of school and principal will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. The school is not likely to grant leaves of absence for the purposes of family holidays.

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

Illness and healthcare appointments

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

Religious observance

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance in advance.

The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

8. SEND- and health-related absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult. Many of Hartlepool Free School pupils arrive with attendance concerns, often at or below the level of SA (serious absence).

The school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

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

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

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Keep the LA up to date - and request an interim review if required
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

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

To support the attendance of pupils the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan.
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs via the school 'Inclusion Panel'
- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes.
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out.

- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence.
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons.
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.
- Half termly review of all attendance plans with the staff team

9. Absence in exceptional circumstances

Exceptional circumstances will include when a pupil is unable to attend because:

- Transport provided by the school, LA or parent is not available and the pupil's home is not within walking distance.
- There has been widespread disruption to travel services which has prevented the pupil from attending.
- The pupil is in custody and will be detained for less than four months.

The use of the 'Y' code for exceptional circumstances will be collected in the school census for statistical purposes.

10. Truancy

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of pupils, and understand the importance of continuity in each pupil's learning.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the Principal is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

11. Absent pupils

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless accompanied by staff. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the absent pupil will inform the Senior Leadership Team immediately who will alert the safeguarding team.
- Urgent attention must be given to considering the student's frame of mind, activity before they went missing, and any current behaviour or safety risks. If deemed appropriate and if the pupil's risks are deemed as requiring it, the police will be contacted using 999, followed immediately by the student's carers.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search and contacting parents

- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the DSL/Principal
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
 - All classrooms
 - All toilets
 - Any outbuildings
 - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- A member of staff will begin a search in a vehicle, keeping in touch with all.
- If the pupil has not been found after 5 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The Serious Incident protocol will be followed after any incident of a pupil absconding from site.
- If the absent pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

The Principal will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

The Principal will instruct that a member of SLT carry out a full investigation, and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

12. Attendance intervention

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the attendance champion, supported by the SLT, will:

- Establish a range of specific, evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
 - Sending letters to parents.
 - Having a weekly tutor review
 - Having a half termly attendance panel.
 - Engaging with LA attendance teams.

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

The school will aim to improve attendance in the overall school cohort by acknowledging good attendance in the following ways:

- Contact home
- Positive attendance certificates

13. Working with parents to improve attendance

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families and work to build trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

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

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

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

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, e.g. bullying, the attendance champion will work with the Principal and any relevant school staff, e.g. the DSL to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the attendance champion will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

14. Persistent absence (PA)

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, these make the majority of our cohort:

- Children in need
- Child Protection
- LAC
- Young carers
- pupils who are eligible for FSM
- pupils with EAL
- pupils with SEND
- pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination
- Anxious and phobic pupils
- Emotionally based school avoidant pupils

The school will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of PA, in conjunction with all relevant external authorities where necessary.

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend school. These include:

- Offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps in learning.
- Meeting with the pupil and their parent to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Leading weekly check-ins to review progress and assess the impact of support.
- Making regular contact with the pupil's parent to discuss progress.
- Assessing whether amendments to EHC plan via Interim Review
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including with regard to additional vulnerability.

The school will focus particularly on pupils who have rates of absence over 50 percent, and will work with the LA and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these pupils are facing.

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

15. Legal intervention

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect as considered in the half termly review, the attendance champion will consider:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team.

- Working with the LA to put a parenting contract or an education supervision order in place.
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

Where the above measures are not effective, the Principal will issue a fixed penalty notice in line with the LA's code of conduct.

Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

16. Monitoring and analysing absence

The attendance champion will monitor and analyse attendance data weekly to ensure that intervention and support is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence, for:

- The school cohort as a whole.
- Individual tutor groups.
- Individual pupils.
- Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds.
- pupils at risk of PA/SA.

The attendance champion will conduct thorough analysis of the above data on a half-termly, termly and full-year basis to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

- Patterns in uses of certain codes.
- Particular days of poor attendance.
- Historic trends of attendance and absence.
- Barriers to attendance.

The attendance champion will provide regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures. The attendance champion will also be responsible for monitoring how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future.

The governing board will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

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

17. Training of staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training.

The governing board will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will be offered regular and ongoing training as part of their CPD opportunities.

Training will cover at least the following:

- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost invariably a result of wider circumstances
- The legal requirements on schools, e.g. the keeping of registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance
- The school's procedures for multi-agency working to provide intensive support for pupils who need it

The Trust board will provide dedicated and enhanced attendance training to the attendance champion and other staff with specific attendance functions in their role – this will include training regarding interpreting and analysing attendance data and supporting pupils to overcome barriers to attendance.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

18. Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. We aspire to an attendance target of above 90% which is within our longer term development plan.

This policy will be reviewed every year by the CEO and submitted to the Trust board for approval, or sooner if legislation. The next scheduled review date for this policy is 2025.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholder

Attendance Plan

Name of pupil		
Year group/class		
Staff supporting with attendance plan and roles		
Date plan was agreed		
○ Attendance history		
○ Current risk factors/current barriers to attendance		
○ Academic targets	○ Milestones	○ Date each milestone achieved
Target 1 -		
Target 2 -		
Target 3 -		

○ **Strategies to be implemented by the school**

Details of strategy (including date commenced)	Purpose of implementing strategy	Member of staff responsible

○ **Expectations of the pupil**

Details of expectations	How this has been communicated to the pupil?	Monitoring arrangements (who by and when?)

Expectations of the family

Details of expectations	How this has been communicated to the pupil's family?	Monitoring arrangements (who by and when?)

External support

Details of agency/partner	Support being offered	Date support commenced

○ Record of attendance reviewing meeting		
Date of review		
Individuals present		
Situation since last review		
Milestones achieved since last review		
Areas discussed		
Outcome of meeting (tick as appropriate)	☐ Continue with initial plan ☐ Continue plan with new or supplementary strategies added ☐ Escalate attendance plan to next stage	
Date of next review		