

Mereside Primary Academy

Attendance Policy 2025-2027



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Electronic copies of this plan are available from	Mereside Primary Academy, Blackpool
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Date of next review	August 2027 (or as required)
Person Responsible for Review	Maria Lydon (SBM)

Philosophy

Mereside Primary Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance is crucial. As an Academy, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as soon as possible.

It is the policy of our Academy to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful Academy career. Mereside Primary Academy will actively promote and encourage 100 percent attendance for all our pupils.

Mereside Primary Academy will give a high priority to conveying to pupils and parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish home - Academy links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems that affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with families and pupils to resolve these problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly, focused, approach aimed at returning the student to full attendance at all times.

This policy has been developed in conjunction with the FCAT Attendance Strategy (July 2025):

*At Fylde Coast Academy Trust (FCAT), our vision is to provide an outstanding education that empowers every pupil to fulfil their potential. This vision is only achievable if pupils attend school regularly and are fully engaged in their learning. Attendance is not a procedural concern — it is a **moral, academic and safeguarding priority. Trustees and members of our LGB's are committed to ensuring that the trust continues to improve its attendance metrics; it is a key aspect of accountability across the governance of our schools.***

Rationale

At Mereside Primary Academy we wish to maintain a high level of attendance and punctuality as we believe that these are both unequivocally linked to student progress. All children are encouraged to target and achieve 100% attendance and to take robust steps to sustain attendance above 98%. Our target is for whole school attendance to be at least 96% in 2023 and beyond.

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential prerequisites of successful learning. They are also an important training and preparation for the world of work. Ensuring good attendance must, therefore, be a high priority for the academy, parents and carers. The efforts of pupils to achieve full attendance should be recognised and rewarded. There must also be identified procedures for responding to poor and irregular attendance and persistent lateness both to the Academy and to lessons. It is vital that everyone works together to achieve success.

Registration

Registration is a legal requirement. There are two legal registration sessions during a school day which are at the start of lesson 1 and at the start of the lesson after the lunch break. Registers will also be taken during every subsequent lesson and/or Class or Form tutorial. If a student does not attend either of the morning or afternoon session registration sessions, they will be marked absent and will lose half a day attendance (1 session).

Attendance and Registration Procedures

The school will:

- ensure that all staff know registration procedures and registration regulations
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session
- complete electronic / paper registers at the beginning of each lesson

- stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence
- display current attendance in school and reward good and improved attendance in all pupils
- set attendance targets for all pupils and use attendance action plans, as required - PLEASE NOTE - absence of 93% or under due to illness requires medical evidence to be provided so that this can be authorised in most circumstances.
- promote the role of the Class Teacher in monitoring and rewarding good attendance for pupils in their class.
- promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence
- consult with all members of the school community, and the PWO service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by Senior Leaders and Academy Council
- include attendance and related issues in newsletters sent to parents and pupils.
- send supportive messages that if a student is absent, she/he is valued and will be missed.
- report to the Academy Council as required.
- enable absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of others.

Responsibilities -parents and carers

It is important that the Academy works in partnership with parents/carers to ensure that good attendance is maintained. Parents are asked to support the Academy by:

- ensuring that their children attend regularly and arrive punctually informing the Academy by telephoning the designated Absence Line, or by email if their son/daughter is unable to attend due to illness. This should be done on the first day of absence. Some indication should be given of the likely length of the absence
- providing a dated note explaining the absence when the student returns to the Academy if the information has not been communicated by other means, in addition to any medical or other evidence required for authorisation (see published requirements for absence authorisation). These vary with attendance and intervention level, PLEASE NOTE - absence of 93% or under due to illness requires medical evidence to be provided so that this can be authorised in most circumstances.
- completing the pro-forma requesting future leave of absence in good time. These forms can be obtained from the main school office
- informing the Academy as soon as possible about any unexpected lateness

Responsibilities of pupils

- pupils must attend registration and lessons on time and in the place indicated to them, for example, their designated Form room or assembly
- pupils arriving late for the Academy, gates close at **8.45am**, must enter via the Main School Office entrance and will be recorded as late by staff if later than the start of lessons at **8.45am**
- pupils returning to the Academy following an absence should bring a note explaining the reason for the absence **on the day that they return to the Academy**, if the information has not been communicated previously by other means
- pupils who arrive at the Academy after **9.15am** must also provide a reason/bring a note since, after this time, they are classified as absent

Schools and academies can no longer authorise holiday requests. Parents/Carers may request a leave of absence in term time but this may only be authorised by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is unable to authorise any exceptional leave that is not requested in advance of the absence.

Parents/Carers must also be aware that the decision to authorise an absence from the Academy lies with the Academy. A note from home does not necessarily guarantee that the absence will be authorised. Any absence must be **unavoidable** to warrant authorisation (e.g. absence to go shopping is an **avoidable absence** in law). If absences are repeated or prolonged or formal intervention is underway e.g. by the Pupil Welfare Officer (PWO), the Academy will ask for medical evidence.

Alternative Provision

Parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends any arranged alternative provision. In this situation, a 'direction' will be issued by the Academy.

The Direction:

- will be provided to parents in writing and must be given not less than two school days before the start date of the alternative provision will be issued by a member of the Senior Leadership Team must be confirmed to the LA if the student has a Statement of Special Education Need or Education, Health and Care Plan

The Direction must state:

- the address of the new provider(s)
- contact name and details at the alternative provision
- number of days that the requirement is in place
- the reasons for and objectives of imposing the requirement
- start and end times, including lunch time for the alternative provider

Parents/carers are expected to make arrangements for the supervision of children who have been excluded from school on any day which is one of the first five school days of any exclusion. Parents/carers are expected to contact Westminster Primary Academy at an early stage and to work with the pastoral support staff, Attendance Officer, Head of Phase, Inclusion Manager and any other staff necessary to resolve any attendance problems together, sometimes with the help of outside agencies.

Principles

Mereside Primary Academy will:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures, registration regulations and education law.
- Complete electronic or paper registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.
- Complete electronic registers at the beginning of each lesson.
- Stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence.
- Display attendance rates around the Academy and reward good and improved attendance of all pupils.
- Set targets for attendance as outlined in the Mereside Primary Academy Improvement Plan (AIP).
- Promote the role of the progress tutor/class teacher in monitoring and rewarding good attendance for pupils in their tutor group.
- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.
- Consult with all members of the Academy community and the Pupil Welfare Officer (PWO) service in developing and maintaining the whole Academy attendance policy.
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by Senior Leaders and the Local Governing Body.
- Include attendance and related issues in the newsletters sent to parents and pupils.
- Report to the Local Governing Body twice yearly.
- Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that if a student is absent, she/he will be missed.
- Have in place procedures that will allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of others.

Procedures

- If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent student on the first morning of absence, we will contact the parent by telephone, text message or a home visit
- Weekly attendance meetings will take place between the Academy and PWO to discuss deteriorating attendances or attendances of concern.

- With prolonged absence a safeguarding visit may be necessary and will be undertaken by the Academy, PWO and/or Police. The aim is to identify and resolve any difficulties that are preventing the student from attending the Academy and to safeguard the student. The parents/carers will be made aware of their legal responsibility regarding attendance.
- The Academy will initiate an attendance plan for pupils' whose attendance falls below 95 per cent or they have a pattern of broken weeks. Attendance targets will be set which will be monitored by Form tutors/class teachers with the support of the Pastoral Team, Attendance Officer and PWO. The parents/carers will be asked for their support in fulfilling the legal requirements regarding Academy attendance.
- In the event of a student returning after a long-term absence an individual reintegration meeting will be initiated by the Pastoral Manager in conjunction with the Form tutors/class teachers and the PWO.
- To address attendance concerns the Pastoral Team will adopt strategies that include:
 - Individual reintegration meeting in order to write an effective 'Student Support Plan' for pupils returning from long term absence.
 - Initial daily contact with parents to 'iron out' any problems occurring.
 - Positive rewards integrating into existing rewards scheme.
 - Establishing a good relationship with parent/student in order to provide the support needed for 'better' attendance or reintegration programmes.
- Reward good and improved attendance through:
 - Attendance rewards
 - Reward lunches
 - Attendance assemblies

Attendance Interventions

Mereside Primary Academy will follow a graduated and tiered intervention process in response to falling attendance in line with the FCAT Attendance Strategy (2025).

Mereside Primary Academy will begin intervention work at < 98%, increasing levels of intervention as absences increase. The table below provides a brief outline as to what the tiered response system looks like and how Mereside Primary Academy interventions support trust expectations:

Tier	Attendance %	Monitoring Category	Trust Expectation	Mereside Primary Processes
1	100%	Excellent	Celebrate and Reward	Assemblies, Teacher Praise, Rewards as appropriate
1	>= 98%	Good	Praise, rewards, encouragement	
2.1	96% to <98%	1st Level Monitoring	Universal support and monitoring by classroom teacher/tutor. Text home informing child's attendance has dropped below 98%.	1st Contact - Class Teacher
2.2	94% to <96%	2nd Level Monitoring	Targeted support, initial communication with home. Attendance discussed if parents are in school for parent's evening/drop off. The possible use of a reminder postcard.	1st Class Teacher 2nd - Attendance Lead Admin/SBM
2.3	92% to <94%	Early Warning of PA	Family Liaison intervention, supportive call to parents. Letter sent to inform parents that attendance has fallen below expectations and the possible impact this may have. Calls home by Family Liaison/Phase Leads or if appropriate SEND lead. Attendance discussed if parents are in school for parent's evening/drop off.	1st - Class Teacher 2nd - Family Liaison or Phase Leaders
2.4	90% to <92%	Risk of PA	Formal attendance meeting with parents to understand barriers. Continued contact by Family Liaison/Attendance Lead. Parents informed of the risk of becoming PA.	1st - Phase Leads 2nd - Family Liaison/Attendance Lead 3rd - SLT
Tier	Attendance %	Monitoring Category	Trust Expectation	Mereside Primary Processes
3.1	>50% to 90%	Persistent (PA)	Intensive support plan, regular review meetings, LA PWO engagement. Intervention process commences. Weekly monitoring by attendance officer. Attendance panel meeting takes place to complete an attendance contract (Possible PWO involvement) Reviewed after 3 weeks.	Trigger: < 90% PWO involvement Panel meeting (SLT, Attendance, Pastoral, PWS, SEND etc. - panel depends on context) Explore DfE Attendance Mentoring Programme involvement SLT
3.2	<=50%	Severe (SA)	Multi-agency approach, safeguarding procedures, statutory action. PWO involvement and potential for FPN.	PWO SLT Family Liaison/Phase Leads

Mereside Primary Academy, in conjunction with the PWO service, will identify cohorts of pupils whose attendance is lower than 92%* or missing 10 or more sessions. Appropriate interventions will be considered such as Fast Track to Positive Outcomes, Penalty Notice Initiative or PWO casework.

Where improvement in attendance is not secured court proceedings can be used to prosecute parents and if proven a range of sentences including fines of up to £2500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment.

Other disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community sentences can be imposed depending upon the circumstances. Costs may also be imposed.

A range of supportive early interventions led by the PWO will seek to improve attendance and avoid the need for prosecution.

*Depending on historic absence, family context and other circumstances, PWS involvement might be triggered at a higher attendance rate to prevent a further increase in absence.

Unauthorised leave during term time

In addition to this and in support of the philosophy of this policy, leave during term time will not be routinely authorised. In accordance with Government guidelines Head Teachers and Principals cannot authorise any leave in term time unless in exceptional circumstances. All requests for leave in term time must be submitted to the Academy in writing. The Academy can request the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to parents/carers following leave in term time.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices may be issued in response to poor school attendance and unauthorised leave (holidays during term time) resulting in a fine and/or legal proceedings under Section 444(1) or 444(1)(A) in a magistrate's court. Please be aware that the maximum sentence for this offence is a fine of £2,500 and/or up to three months imprisonment.

From 19th August 2024:

- Penalty notices issued for offences that take place after 19 August 2024 will be charged at a new rate of £160 per parent per child. This can be paid at £80 if paid within 21 days
- Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate
- The threshold at which a penalty notice must be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or school years
- A maximum of two penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered (such as prosecution)
- Only penalty notices issued for absences taking place after 19 August 2024 will count towards the above thresholds
- Penalty notices can be issued when pupils are located in a public place without justification during the first five days of any period of exclusion
- Holidays will be unauthorised for all children. Fixed penalty notices will be utilised for requests of 5 days or more, even if attendance is 100%. As a Trust we expect parents to utilise clear school closure times for holidays.
- If parents/carers feel that there are exceptional circumstances for the absence it will need to be discussed with the school attendance lead/Headteacher prior to the absence.

See Appendix 1 for further information.

Non-routine admissions

The Academy welcomes non-routine admissions and will support the pupil's integration by:

- Initiating an integration plan and/or referral to support staff as necessary
- Monitor attendance to ensure the student has settled into Academy life
- Maintain regular liaison with the pupil's parents/carers
- Refer to the Pastoral Manager and/or PWO if problems with integration or attendance issues persist

Punctuality

As both attendance and punctuality are linked to pupil progress, pupils are expected to arrive at the Academy on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late.

Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised and occasions of lateness should be rare. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other pupils with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved immediately, it can be referred to the Pupil Welfare Service.

Performance

Mereside Primary Academy aims for the highest standards for attendance and punctuality to enable our pupils to reach their full potential.

When evaluating success, the Academy will consider whether or not:

- Attendance has improved and whether attendance levels are in line or better than the national average.
- Punctuality has improved.
- Integration plans have been successful.
- The Academy has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the Academy, governing body and the local community.
- Pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within the Academy.
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in Academy assemblies, PSHE lessons or as a theme for any other lessons.

Practice

The Academy will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately.
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers.
- Regularly analysing attendance data.
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance.
- Liaising closely with the Academy's PWO.

In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of the Academy staff will make attendance and punctuality a priority and convey to the pupils the importance of their education.

This Policy will be reviewed every two years (or as required)

The next review is August 2027

APPENDIX 1

Blackpool Council Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices for School Absence

<https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Education-and-schools/Documents/Joint-code-of-conduct-for-issuing-education-related-penalty-notice.aspx>

Introduction

This code of conduct has been developed in accordance with the national framework for penalty notices for school absence issued by the Department for Education within statutory guidance [working together to improve school attendance](#). As such, this code of conduct comes into effect from and in relation to unauthorised school absences taking place from 19 August 2024.

It includes the codes of conduct in respect of notices for attendance and notices for the whereabouts of excluded pupils. It provides details of the procedural arrangements for the administration of such notices. In addition, the details of the legislation that underpins the issuing of education-related penalty notices can be found in Appendix 1.

National framework for penalty notices

In order to ensure a consistent approach to school attendance enforcement the national framework for penalty notices for school absence specifies the following:

Penalty notice threshold

The threshold at which a penalty notice **must** be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period¹. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. The sessions of unauthorised absence do not have to be consecutive. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or school years.

Penalty notice amounts

Penalty notices are issued at £160 and should be paid within 28 days. They can be paid at £80 if paid within 21 days.

Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at a higher rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate.

Limits on issue

Only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Recipients of penalty notices

For the purposes of school attendance, a parent is defined under s576 of the Education Act as: all natural parents and any person who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility or who has care of a child or young person. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

School responsibilities

Under The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 all state funded schools

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must consider as soon as practicable, whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country. Judgements should be made by school taking into account the working together to improve school attendance statutory guidance, using a 'support first' ethos, except where this would not be appropriate for example, for unauthorised leave/holiday.

Local authority responsibilities

Where a request for a penalty notice is made by a school, the local authority must consider if the notice should be issued in line with the national framework, the local code of conduct, the public interest and after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Local authorities must record where a penalty notice has been issued to an individual parent in respect of individual pupils and retain these records for at least 3 years from the date of issuing any notice in order for escalation procedures to be followed.

Non-payment of penalty

Non-payment of the penalty within the 28-day time limit will trigger the prosecution process under the provisions of section 444 of the 1996 act or section 103 of the 2006 act, except where the notice is withdrawn (as detailed in the criteria below). As with all prosecutions, the code for crown prosecutors must be followed, and the rules of evidence and criminal procedural rules apply. Therefore, the authority must be satisfied that any prosecution meets the “evidential” test and the “public interest” test, as set out in the said code before proceeding with a prosecution.

Withdrawing penalty notices

Once issued, a penalty notice may only be withdrawn in accordance with relevant criteria under regulation 8 of The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulation 2007:

Where the relevant LA agrees that:

- The penalty notice should not have been issued; or
- The penalty notice is shown to have been issued to the wrong person; or
- It appears to the authority that the notice contains material errors

If an LA ultimately decides not to bring proceedings in respect of the non-payment of a penalty notice, the notice must be formally withdrawn.

The LA may reissue a penalty notice where appropriate.

Penalty notice income

The LA will retain any revenue from the income generated by education-related penalty notices. Any income from penalty notices should be first used for the administration of the penalty notice system and prosecution. If a surplus remains, this can be spent on attendance support.

Local code of conduct for Blackburn, Blackpool and Lancashire

The following sets out the locally agreed protocol for issuing penalty notices pan-Lancashire:

To ensure consistent and equitable delivery and the avoidance of duplicate notices being issued, the local delivery of the penalty notice scheme will be managed by the LA.

Each LA will only be responsible for considering the issuing of penalty notices for children who are on the roll of a school within their authority. Where pupils reside within the Lancashire, Blackpool or Blackburn with Darwen local authority area but are on roll at a school in another authority the LA for the school will decide on the appropriate action to be taken. If required, cross-border discussions will take place between

the relevant LAs.

A penalty notice for non-attendance can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence. Any schools submitting requests must adhere to the guidance on the marking of registers within working together to improve school attendance.

Requests for penalty notices must be submitted to the LA no later than three school weeks after the original offence was committed.

As per the national framework, where the LA is of the opinion that a pupil's level of attendance is so low that initiating proceedings in the magistrates' court would be more appropriate, the LA reserves the right not to issue a penalty notice. Each local authority will determine which action should be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Procedure for issuing penalty notices

The relevant nominated officer(s) for each LA will issue penalty notices for non-attendance on behalf of their respective LA.

Penalty notices will only be issued by first class post (which constitutes good service) and should not be hand delivered, other than in exceptional circumstances. This will ensure that evidential and health and safety requirements are met.

Requests from schools and the police to issue penalty notices will be considered by the LA provided that:

- All relevant information is supplied in the manner specified by the relevant LA
- The application is accompanied by a completed local authority school attendance support checklist, which demonstrates that where appropriate, support options have been considered and offered. This checklist is not required for requests in relation to unauthorised leave/holidays
- The circumstances of the pupil's absence meet all the evidential requirements of the national framework for penalty notices for school absence and this code of conduct
- The issuing of a penalty notice will not conflict with other intervention strategies already in place or other enforcement measures already being processed

The LA will endeavour to respond to all such requests within 10 school days, providing all criteria are met. They will then either confirm that penalty notice procedures will be implemented or that other, more appropriate, interventions will be explored.

Notices to improve

In cases of unauthorised absence, other than notification of intention to take unauthorised leave of absence, the LA will:

- Issue a formal written notice to improve to the parent/carer of the possibility of a penalty notice being issued
- In the same letter, set a period of 15 school days during which the pupil's attendance will be closely monitored
- Issue a penalty notice through the post if the required level of improvement has not been achieved

Unauthorised leave/holidays

Notices to improve will generally not be issued in cases where all or the majority of the absence is due to unauthorised leave. Schools must ensure that they notify parents (in writing) when a leave request is not authorised, and that if the leave is still taken, the school will apply for legal sanctions. Where parents do not give notice of a leave of absence, schools must still inform the parents (in writing) that the absence has not been authorised and that the school intends to apply for legal sanctions.

Penalty notice outcomes

Schools will be notified by the LA when a penalty notice has been issued, when a payment has been received and where a payment has not been received within the specified timescales. This will normally be via email from the issuing officer or LA team.

Subsequent offences

Where two penalty notices have been issued to a parent within a rolling 3-year period, and those penalty notices meet the criteria set out in the national framework, the LA will consider the following options:

- Prosecution under s444(1) Education Act 1996
- Prosecution under s444(1)(A) Education Act 1996 (aggravated offence)
- Application for an education supervision order

Where applicable, schools will be asked to indicate (if known) the previous school of any child who has not been on their roll for the last 3 years, on the penalty notice request.

In cases where the pupil has moved between local authority areas in the previous 3 years, either because the family has moved house or the pupil has moved school, an additional check will be carried out by the responsible officer by contacting the previous LA. Where no response is received within 10 working days, it will be assumed that the parent has not previously received a penalty notice.

Local authorities may make these checks to the LAs included in this code of conduct via the following emails:

crossborder.penaltynotice@blackburn.gov.uk

crossborder.penaltynotice@blackpool.gov.uk

crossborder.penaltynotice@lancashire.gov.uk

Reporting and review

The three LAs will review the penalty notice procedures at appropriate intervals and:

- Ensure that all relevant statistical information is made available to the Department for Education (DfE)
- Propose amendments to the procedures as and when appropriate