



'Let Your Light Shine'
(Matthew 5.v16)

Attendance policy

Approval Date: Summer Term 2025

Review Date: Summer Term 2026

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

'Let Your Light Shine'

(Matthew 5.v16)

At St. Stephen's Church of England Primary School we are proud to be a Church School with a distinct Christian character and ethos. We promote a love of learning within a safe and secure environment, in which every child matters as a precious gift from God. We believe every child is unique, different and special.

Christian values and spirituality are at the heart of all aspects of school life. Our school's Christian ethos reflects mutual care and concern- where faith, love, hope and truth flourish. Our school is a place where children are able to establish and deepen their understanding of God through prayer and reflection in daily acts of Collective Worship and Religious Education.

We provide a creative and challenging curriculum in order to inspire and motivate our pupils. We want all our children to feel secure and happy, enabling them to reach their fullest potential. We believe that happy children learn well and we thrive on celebrating the achievements of all our pupils across all areas of learning.

We aim to create an environment where children develop the confidence to think for themselves; where pupil voice is at the heart of all decision making and where all children feel valued and respected.

Our school ethos is built on mutual tolerance and respect for all human beings, regardless of beliefs culture or race. Charity and caring for those in need is fundamental to our work in school. We are all children of God so we aim to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves.

We work in partnership with governors, families; the wider community and our local Parish Church to ensure everyone has a voice in achieving the best possible education for our children.

Ultimately we are committed to excellence for all and through a process of continual reflection and evaluation we ensure that standards are continually raised and improved.

'Let Your Light Shine'

(Matthew 5.v16)

Our school motto encompasses all that we are about as a school. 'Let your light shine'

The motto incorporates three fundamental elements:

The light of the Gospel message of Jesus

The light of individual talents

The light of learning

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1. Aims

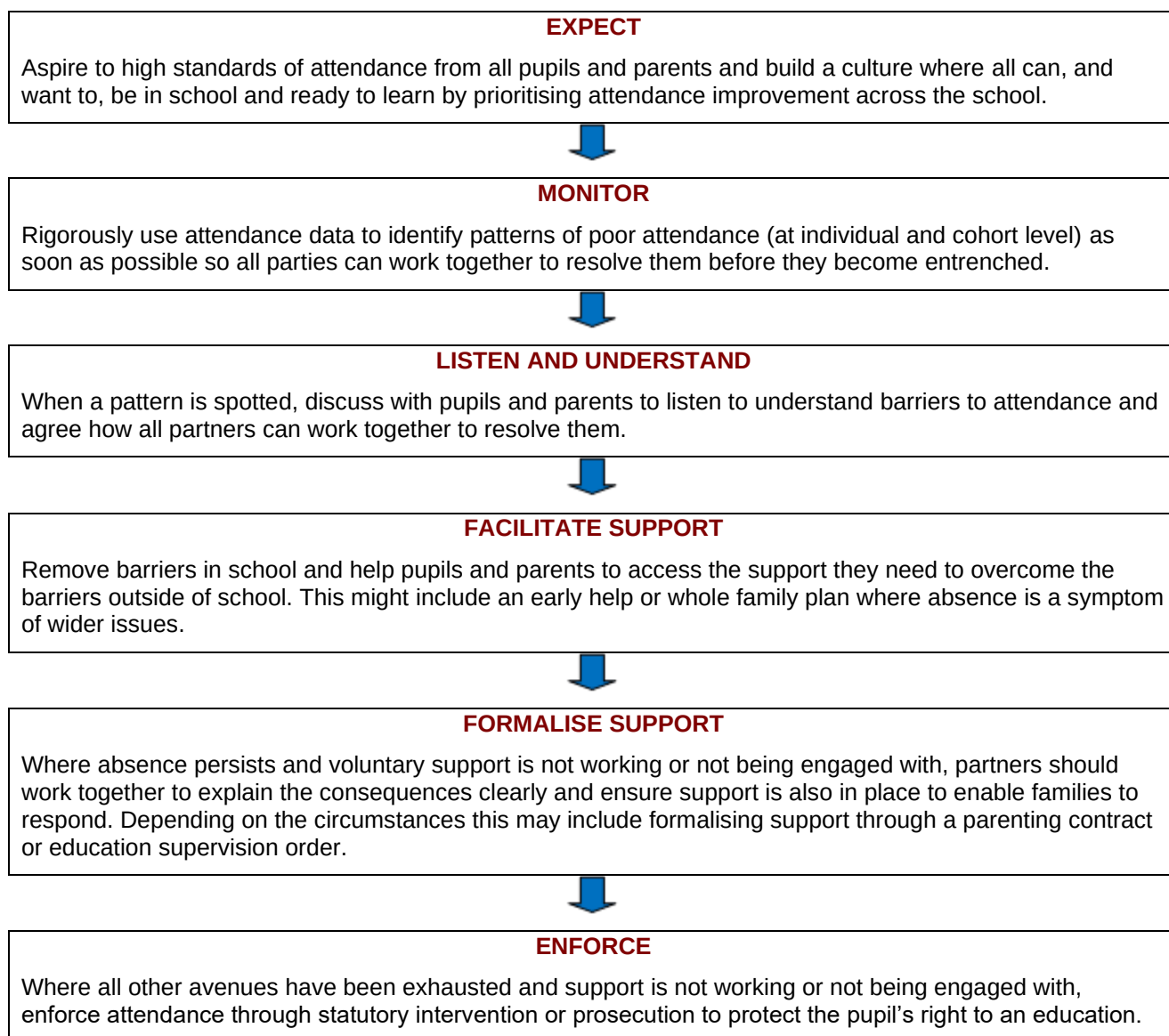
We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- ❖ Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- ❖ Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- ❖ Acting early to address patterns of absence
- ❖ Ensuring every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled
- ❖ Acting early to address patterns of absence

Working together to improve attendance

The most vital part of encouraging good attendance is to ensure that the school is a place to which the children want to come: a place where they are treated with respect and feel valued; a place where their needs are recognised and are being addressed; a place where all children can experience success within a rich, relevant and diversified curriculum.

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:



2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn 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 Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- ❖ [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

School attendance contacts are:

Mrs Jean Doloughan - Chair of Governors

Mrs Alison Richardson – Headteacher

Mrs Deborah Wilson – School Business Manager/Attendance Officer

Mrs Nicola Lawson – Attendance Officer

3.1 The governing body

The 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. As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ❖ Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents and staff.
- ❖ Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- ❖ Ensure that governor's meetings will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- ❖ Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site.

3.2 The headteacher

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the headteacher will:

- ❖ Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- ❖ Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- ❖ Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- ❖ Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.

- ❖ Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- ❖ Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- ❖ Report to ECM Committee meeting each term on attendance records, data and provision.
- ❖ Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.
- ❖ Issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The attendance officer / school business manager

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school attendance officer and business manager will:

- ❖ Monitor attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- ❖ Report concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- ❖ Work with Attendance Improvement Team to tackle persistent absence
- ❖ Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- ❖ Advise the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Teachers and support staff

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- ❖ Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- ❖ Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- ❖ Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- ❖ Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- ❖ Work professionally with parents, carers, students and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- ❖ Ensure understanding and are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each lesson and session.

3.5 School office staff

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, school office staff will:

- ❖ communicate with parents about absence and record it on the school system.
- ❖ carry out first day calling and report any concerns about attendance to the Attendance Officer.

3.6 Parents

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents / carers will:

- ❖ Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- ❖ Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- ❖ Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- ❖ Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.

- ❖ Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- ❖ Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

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

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.

4.2 Pupil arrival and registration

Pupils can enter school from 8.35am and registration time is at 8.45am.

Members of staff will welcome children into school at the main gates and they will then proceed to their class. Pupils are encouraged to arrive in good time to allow them to get to their classroom before 8.45am.

At 8.45am the pupil entry gates will be locked and any late pupils must then request access via the security gate. A member of staff will record the pupil's time of arrival before they then proceed to class.

It is vitally important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class.

- ❖ If a child arrives late, between 8.45am and 9.00am, a late mark will be recorded in the register (L).
- ❖ If a child arrives after 9.00pm, their attendance will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to a fixed penalty notice being issued).

4.3 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.45am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Absence messages should be notified to school office staff by:

- ❖ Leaving a message on the school answerphone (Tel: 01388 746426 – option 2)
- ❖ emailing: ststephensceparents@durhamlearning.net
- ❖ Leaving a message via Facebook messenger <https://www.facebook.com/ststephensce>

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the 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.

Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time).

4.4 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours (**before 8.45am and after 3.15pm**) where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.5 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- ❖ If a child arrives late, between 8.45am and 9.00am, a late mark will be recorded in the register (L).
- ❖ If a child arrives after 9.00pm, their attendance will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to a fixed penalty notice being issued).

Pupils who persistently arrive late will receive a letter from school informing them of the number of late sessions and the impact this has on their education. If the pupil continues to be persistently late then a meeting will be arranged with the Attendance Officer/Business Manager/Headteacher to discuss the reasons for lateness and offer appropriate support if necessary.

4.6 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- ❖ Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by telephone on the first day of absence.
- ❖ Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- ❖ Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- ❖ Identify the correct attendance code to use

If a child has not been at school and no contact has been made with parents, then a home visit by the Attendance Officer and/or the School Business Manager /Headteacher may be carried out, particularly if there are any additional safeguarding concerns.

4.7 Periods of extended absence

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days (even if they have a genuine reason which is authorized) then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received, then the school will contact home to 'check in' and offer support if needed.

4.8 Children Missing from Education

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to the Local Authority.

Reasonable steps to be taken by school staff include:

- ❖ Telephone calls to all known contacts (parents are asked to provide a minimum of two emergency contacts)
- ❖ Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- ❖ Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- ❖ Possible home visits
- ❖ Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the pupil/family

All contacts and outcomes to be recorded on the pupil's file.

4.9 Reporting to parents

Parents will receive a copy of their child's registration certificate with their termly report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

NB: Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- ❖ Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- ❖ 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
- ❖ Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- ❖ Leave of absence may be granted for other reasons such as family emergencies and each case will be considered individually.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

See appendix 2 - escalation of procedures

Attendance data is reviewed on a weekly basis and wherever a pattern of absence emerges or there are concerns regarding persistent absence the following procedure will apply:

On a half termly basis, parents of all pupils whose attendance falls below 96% will receive a letter from school informing them of their child's attendance percentage and the impact their absence has on their education. If the pupil continues to be persistently absent with no valid reason then a meeting will be arranged with the Attendance Officer/Business Manager/Headteacher to discuss the reasons for absence and offer appropriate support if necessary.

The purpose of these meetings are to:

- ❖ Make parents aware of their child's attendance and/or punctuality.
- ❖ Ensure parents are aware that a referral to the Attendance Improvement Team may be necessary if there are a significant number of unauthorised absences.
- ❖ Discuss reasons for absence.
- ❖ Look at additional support that may be available, eg. Family Support, School Nurse.
- ❖ Look at strategies for promoting good attendance, eg. Reward charts.
- ❖ Raise awareness of the impact of good attendance on pupil outcomes.
- ❖ Formulate an agreed Attendance Action Plan

It is clear that children alone cannot always ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. From the outset, parents are encouraged to take an active interest in the work of the School and to build and support their children's enthusiasm for attending school.

5.3 Legal sanctions

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends the school they are enrolled at regularly and on time. The School and Local Authority will work with parents if they have a problem with attendance and offer appropriate support to improve attendance. If attendance does not improve or parents do not accept the help and support offered, the school or Local Authority may issue you with a warning notice, Penalty Notice or ask you to attend an interview to ask you questions about whether you have broken the law.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- ❖ The 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 pupil 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 or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

In order to promote attendance and punctuality the school will:

- ❖ give out a weekly trophy for the class with the best attendance, this will be shared on our Facebook page
- ❖ any children who achieve 100% attendance over each term will receive a certificate
- ❖ Each half term, we send a text home to parents of children who have gained 100% for the half term, to congratulate them.
- ❖ Improved attendance will be recognized and rewarded each half term.
- ❖ termly reports to parents will contain a record of individual pupils' attendance.

7. Attendance monitoring

Pupil-level absence data is published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

The school Attendance Officer monitors attendance on a weekly basis and raises any concerns with the Headteacher and appropriate actions are taken. The Attendance Officer also reports attendance data to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

The school uses attendance data to:

- ❖ track the attendance of individual pupils
- ❖ identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- ❖ monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support

see appendix 2 – escalation of procedures

see appendix 3 – effect of attendance on attainment

8. Policy Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum, annually by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing body.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- ❖ Child protection and Safeguarding policy
- ❖ Behaviour policy
- ❖ Equality, Diversity & Cohesion Policy
- ❖ Supporting Children with Medical Conditions
- ❖ Health & Well-being Policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
I	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
l	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2 – Escalation of procedures

96%-100%	Attendance levels are good to excellent Positive encouragement / incentives / rewards required to maintain high levels of attendance
93%-95.9%	Attendance levels beginning to cause concern Analyse data and provide reports to regularly monitor attendance/reason for absence, patterns etc. Letter from Headteacher warning parents of concern and advise that future absences will not be authorised unless medical evidence is received
90%-92.9%	Attendance levels causing more significant concern Parents invited to a meeting with the Headteacher and Attendance Officer at school and an Attendance Action Plan is agreed A date for the plan to be reviewed to be agreed at the meeting (three to four weeks), individual attendance target set.
Below 90%* Below 85%**	Attendance decreased to an unacceptable level – below persistent absence rate – despite interventions by school *below 90% - refer to Family Support Services when complex issued identified. **below 85% - refer to Attendance Improvement Team for prosecution.

Appendix 3 – Effect of attendance on attainment

