

John Fletcher of Madeley
————— *Primary School* —————

School Attendance Policy

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Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to set out clearly the Local Authority (LA)'s Policy on what schools do through the use of a whole-school approach to promoting regular attendance.

Attendance at school is based on a range of statutory requirements. Parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring those children of compulsory school age receive a suitable education, either by compulsory attendance at school or otherwise. (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996)

These requirements place duties on the (LA), who are required, by law, to ensure parents fulfil their responsibility of ensuring that their child receives an education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. This LA duty is delegated to the Attendance Support Team (AST) who work with schools to ensure that all legal interventions relating to school attendance can be accessed.

It is **only** the school within the context of the law that can approve absence, not parents. Therefore, only the School can decide whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. This has to be recorded in the attendance register against the child's record of attendance.

The Importance of Regular School Attendance

The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is a prerequisite to a good education and securing it must therefore be a high priority for school, governors, LAs, parents and the pupils themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils diminish the value of the education provided for them; they may also damage the learning of others because fluctuations in the size of pupil group may restrict the scope for effective teaching.

Attendance is now increasingly regarded as a measure of the quality of the education offered by a school and the government has indicated that all schools should be aiming for a target of at least 97%.

Should the School Attendance Team (which meets every 3 weeks) have ongoing concerns about a child's attendance record, then the process outlined in Appendix I will be followed.

Reporting Absences

It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of their child's unexpected absence as soon as possible. Parents are required to contact the school office on the first day of absence, either in person or with a telephone call by 9.30am. If your child is ill, the school should be notified of the nature of the illness and when your child is expected to be able to return to school. If we do not receive information on the reason for absence, then the absence will be classed as **unauthorised** in the register and on your child's report.

Please note that if we have not been contacted by you, it is part of our school policy for a member of the Admin Team to contact parents on the first day of absence to enquire about your child's absence, which also ensures that your child is safe and has not set out to school and failed to arrive.

If the Admin team has been unable to contact parents, the School Attendance Team will be asked to make a “safe and well” visit to the home. If there is no answer at the home address, a calling card will be left requesting parents to contact school as soon as possible. If there is still no contact made then school will call 101 to request a “safe and well” check for the child to be made by the police.

If your child has been away from school for 3 consecutive days, even with a reason being given, we may ask the School Attendance Team to make a “safe and well” call or visit to the home. The School Attendance Team may also call or visit if there is conflicting information regarding the pupil’s absence.

All children and families will be considered in the same way, in accordance with our Christian Value of Equality.

Leave in Term Time

The LA policy supports new legislation which makes it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There is no automatic right to any leave or holiday in term time. Parents should refer to the information in Appendix II.

Leave of absence must be requested from and agreed by the school **in advance** of any absence. If approved, the absence is registered as authorised and if not approved but still taken, as unauthorised. Documentation is in place to use when dealing with any requests for leave in term time. This provides parents with information about the possible consequences of taking leave that has not been authorised.

Permission is granted in accordance with arrangements made by the governing body of the school. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

When considering requests for leave in term time, the Headteacher will take into account that absence shall not be granted unless;

- a request has been made in advance to the Headteacher by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- the Headteacher, or a person authorised by the Headteacher, considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that request.

These regulations clearly make the point that the Headteacher has the final decision as to whether to authorise the leave or not. There should be no ‘blanket policy’ but schools should consider individual circumstances.

In deciding whether or not to grant the request for leave of absence the following should be taken into account;

- overall pattern of attendance;
- age of the child(ren)
- phase of education;
- time of the year and examinations;
- length, destination and purpose of the holiday and whether it is likely to be a rare event in the life of the child;
- family circumstances and the parent's reasons for wanting to take their annual holiday during term time.

A child's name can be removed from the register if the pupil has been granted a leave of absence and after absence:

- they have not returned by the agreed date;
- and they have continued to be absent for a further twenty school days;
- and the Headteacher is not satisfied that this is because they are ill or the absence is unavoidable.

Any pupils to be removed from the school roll should first be referred to the Attendance Support Team.

Procedures for authorising leave in term time can be summarised as:

- Holidays in term time are actively discouraged by the school and the LA;
- Holidays in term time are not a right and should not automatically be granted;
- Leave should only be granted where proper procedures have been followed;
- Leave of absence should not be granted retrospectively;
- It remains a discretionary power of the Headteacher to authorise leave of absence. Clear advice needs to be included within the school's attendance policy and prospectus.
- Parents who continue to remove their child from school without authorisation may be issued with a Penalty Notice. Please see Appendix I for further details.

Other Absences

Leave of absence may be given for the child to attend a medical or dental appointment. We may ask for an appointment card or letter (or any other form of notification e.g. text message) for our records.

Appointments should be made out of school hours whenever possible and should not normally require more than a few hours/half a day absence from school. Afternoon appointments, avoiding morning English and Maths lessons, are less disruptive to your child's education.

Also, Leave of Absence may be given for a child to attend a very special occasion, such as a close family wedding, funeral or award ceremony.

Children should never be absent from school for the purpose of shopping trips, looking after younger children/parents or birthdays or “days out”.

Authorising Absence

Authorised absence will be granted when it can be demonstrated that:

1. The child was given permission for leave of absence by the Headteacher.
2. The child was ill or prevented from attendance by any unavoidable cause.
3. The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parents belong.

Absences will be duly considered with understanding in accordance with our Christian Value of Compassion.

Lateness

It is the legal responsibility of parents to ensure that children arrive at school on time. Any child arriving after the school's official starting time (8.55am) will be classified on the register as late. Registration will close 30 minutes after the school start time. Any child arriving after that time will be classified as an unauthorised absence. Being persistently late for school could result in a prosecution.

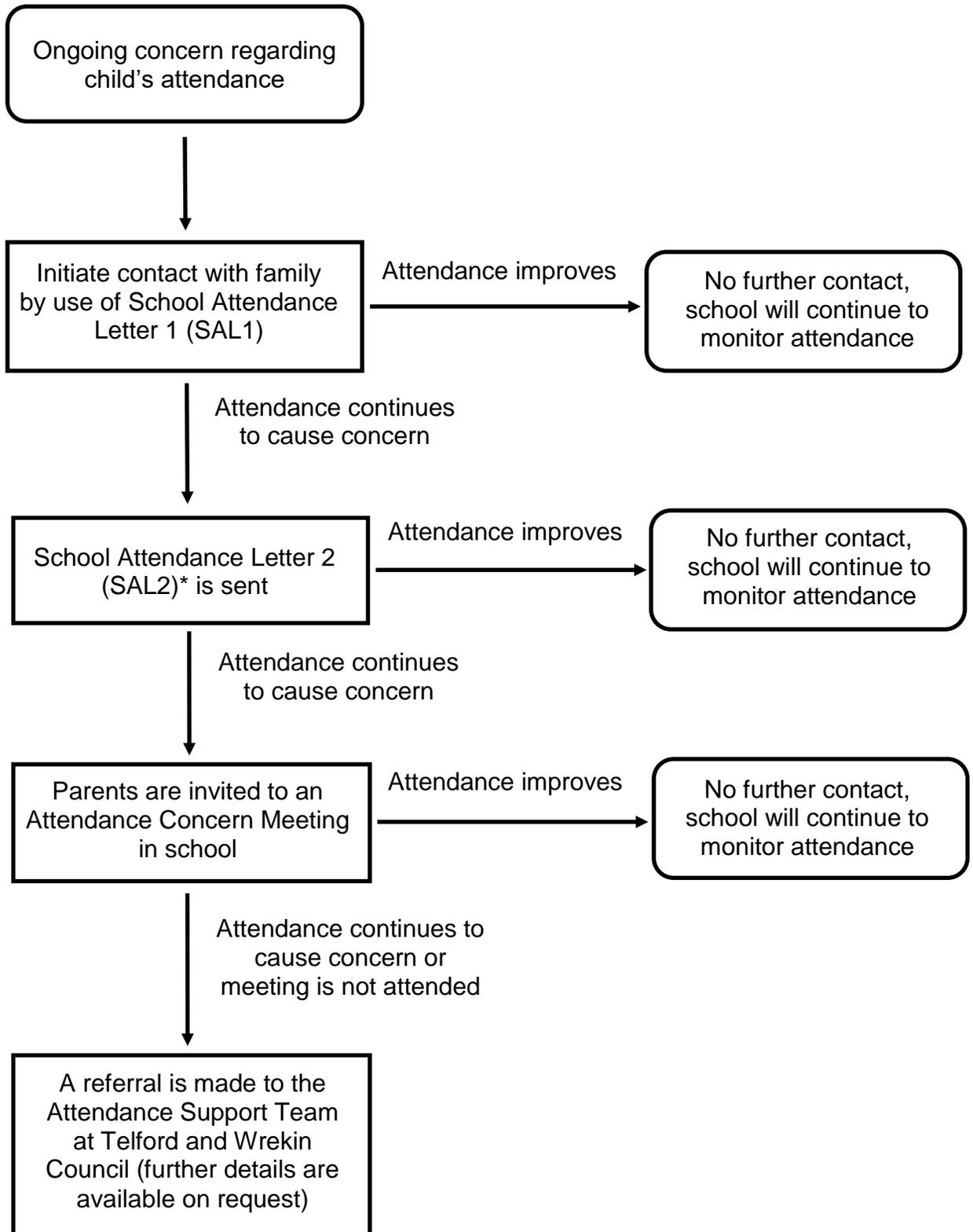
At the start of the school day children arriving after 8.55am must enter the buildings through the Main Entrances, as all other doors will be locked. Children must report to the Reception Office, so that attendance and arrangements for dinner are noted.

Parents of children who are persistently late will be referred to the School Attendance Team.

NB Whenever the word “parent” is used, it is done so considering Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 (EA 1996), where a “parent” in relation to a child or young person is defined as:

- *The biological parents of a child, whether they are married or not.*
- *Anyone who although not a biological parent has parental responsibility for a child.*
- *Any person, who although not a biological parent and who does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person.*
- *A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of their biological or legal relationship with the child (for example, a foster carer or family and friends' carer who has been delegated responsibility for taking day-to-day decisions about the child but does not have parental responsibility).*

Appendix I:



Appendix II:

Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time

1. Parents wishing the school to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully and then complete a Request for Leave in Term Time Form which can be obtained from school. This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered well before the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any holiday booking arrangements before receiving the school's decision on their request. In any event the request form must be received by the school at least four weeks before the departure date to allow sufficient time for appropriate consideration.
2. The granting of leave of absence in school term time is, by law, a matter for consideration and decision by the school. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time. The Department for Education (DfE) and Telford & Wrekin Local Authority (LA) policy is that family holidays should not be taken in school term time. Where such requests are made, for the leave to be granted, the Headteacher should decide if there are exceptional circumstances.
3. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence the demands of the National and wider School Curriculum especially at the Key Stage assessment stage. In considering a request, the school will take account of: -
 - a. the exceptional circumstances stated that have given rise to the request;
 - b. the age of the child;
 - c. the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements;
 - d. the overall attendance pattern of the child;
 - e. the nature of the trip.
 - f. students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will not normally be granted leave of absence.
4. Where parents have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The Headteacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. It is possible that because of these factors different decisions may be made. It is hoped that if this situation arises parents will be persuaded to accept the reasons for refusal given and, thereby, withdraw any other requests.
5. Where requests for a grant of leave of absence are received from only one parent the response letter – agreeing or refusing – will be either addressed to both/all parents where they live at the same address or to each where they do not. This is to ensure,

particularly in the case of a refusal, that both or all 'parents' are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring a refusal as the refusal letter clearly states that each parent will receive a penalty notice.

6. Should the school decide to grant leave of absence but, the child does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and, no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence or, make known the whereabouts of the child, his/her place at the school could be lost.

7. Should the School decide not to grant leave of absence and parents still take their child out of school the absence will be recorded as unauthorised which may be subject to a Holiday Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per child. From 1st September 2013 this fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.