



## **Attendance Policy**

February 2024

**Date Agreed by Governors:**

**Review Date: Spring 2025 – Reviewed and amended based on new guidance – ‘Working together to improve school attendance - May 2022**

## Introduction

We recognise that good attendance, alongside good behaviour, is a central part of Sherdley's vision, values, ethos and day to day life.

This document is designed to foster a spirit of teamwork, ensuring that everyone works together for the benefit of the children in our care. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that parents ensure that their child attends regularly, and that school takes all reasonable measures to ensure equality of access for pupils; and this policy sets out how, together, we will achieve this.

## The importance of school attendance

*'Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.'* [p.6 Working Together to Improve School Attendance, May 2022]

### Learning:

Children are only able to access the quality learning opportunities offered at Sherdley Primary if they are in attendance. This includes provision for additional pastoral and emotional support to address any identified, child specific needs.

The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 have higher rates of attendance compared to those with the lowest attainment. [Taken from p.7 Working Together to Improve School Attendance. May 2022] Ensuring children's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

**Safeguarding:** A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility.

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis may be considered as a safeguarding matter. School based attendance plans, Level 2 referrals for Early Help support, as well as Level 3 social care referrals to the Local Authority Safeguarding team could occur as a result of attendance concerns. [SEE APPENDIX B]

## Regular Attendance

Section 1 of the document Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022 states:

*'Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from school.'*

The law in relation to the regular attendance of a child at school is strict in the application of this responsibility. We always seek to support our parents and carers in carrying out their legal responsibility.

A child's learning journey starts at the very beginning of their Early Years education, and this is an important time for parents and carers to embed good habits of attendance and punctuality with their child/ren, which will follow them through school life and the wider world beyond school.

Parents and carers are expected to have good routines in place to ensure their child/ren are prepared for school each day and are ready to learn by attending regularly and being in school on time. Once established, these routines help greatly in supporting children to become independent learners with fewer anxieties about expectations and the overall structure of the school day.

We also recognise that at times difficulties or changes may arise within a family or home life which can impact upon a child's learning and school attendance. In such cases it is very important for a child, parent or carer to speak to us so that we can listen and discuss the best possible way forward. Ensuring that a child's education is not interrupted or impacted by these situations is very important, and regular school attendance should always be seen as a positive and stable part of what can sometimes be a more disrupted home life (which can be for multiple

reasons, of varying time scales.)

Please speak to your child's class teacher or call or contact school and speak to Mrs C Eccleston, our Attendance Support Officer if you have any queries or concerns.

### **The Law Relating to Attendance**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable: -*

*(a) To age, ability and aptitude, and*

*(b) To any special educational needs he/she may have*

*Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'*

Section 1 of the document Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022 states :

*'Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from school.'*

### **The Law Relating to Safeguarding**

The September 2022 document entitled 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' refers all schools to Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 which places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

### **Attendance Registers**

The law requires all schools to have an attendance register. All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on the register. The attendance register is taken twice daily and on each occasion a record is made as to whether a pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity (such as a planned school visit)
- Absent due to illness or another verified and previously known reason (such as a pre-arranged medical appointment)
- Not in school without a reason supplied

School will follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for absence if the reason has not been previously supplied
- Ensure correct safeguarding procedures are followed if necessary
- Identify, and if necessary, amend codes used on the official register based on new or previously inaccurate information
- Ensure the most accurate information is recorded so that the School Census and other reports based on attendance data are as accurate as possible

### **Understanding Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

**Authorised Absence:** When a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer which fits this description. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent/carers has used the online APP facility to inform the school, OR a request has been made for an absence in exceptional circumstances which has been agreed by the Headteacher.

**Unauthorised absence:** When a child is away from school without a valid reason, even if the parent supports the absence. Absence without a valid reason or explanation is recorded as Unauthorised. For example, a holiday taken in school time, OR keeping a sibling away from school due to one child being ill, OR repeated absences for illness which are not supported by evidence of medical treatment being sought.

APPENDIX B will be followed in relation to the level of support required in each case

### **Close of Registers**

Registers close at a set time in order to maintain the required level of curriculum provision for children, and also to establish a suitable point for monitoring each day. The standard close of registers is 9.10am for all age groups. Repeated lateness is not acceptable and causes disruption to the curriculum and learning of children, as well as negatively impacting upon children's mental well-being and feelings of anxiety. Children who arrive late for school miss the important opportunity to 'catch up' with friends, may miss important information about the plan for the day and are often not in the best frame of mind for learning. This often manifests itself in children feeling left out, confused, anxious and eventually not wanting to come to school.

Arrival of pupils after the official closure will result in an unauthorised 'U' code being applied, which can impact negatively on children where we are monitoring and seeking to improve attendance.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

APPENDIX B will be followed in relation to the level of support required in each case.

### **Absence Procedures**

#### **Parents, If your child is absent, you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence. This should be done using the school APP Absence form which means the information can instantly be added onto the registers and often means further contact is not required.
- This can also be done via a phone call to school 01744 678683
- Make contact with school every day either by APP form, telephone/text or in person to keep us updated
- Alternatively, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.
- THIS IS ONE OF OUR WHOLE SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING PRODECURES – TO ENSURE THAT ALL CHILDREN ARE SAFE

#### **If your child is absent, we will:**

- Update our register with the information you have provided for us, and if necessary, follow up to ascertain further details so that we use the accurate coding
- Review and monitor returns to school, including amending any codes on the register – for example authorizing an absence for illness if a child returns with antibiotics, or unauthorising an absence if we have reason to believe that a holiday has been taken in term time without seeking the relevant permission.
- APPENDIX B will be followed in relation to the level of support required in each case.

### **Telephone Numbers and Contact**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have contact numbers at all times. Parents must ensure the school always has an up-to-date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. It is VITAL that one member of the household has access to the school online APP facility as this is the main, and most secure method of communication between home and school.

### **The School Attendance Support Officer**

Our School Attendance Support Officer is Mrs C Eccleston. They can be contacted via the main school office on 01744 678683.

In line with *p.9 Working Together to Improve Attendance in Schools. May 2022*, the role of Mrs Eccleston is to ensure registers are completed accurately, monitor and analyse absence data to identify pupils requiring support and to build strong relationships with families, including listening to and understanding barriers to attendance, and work with families to remove them.

SEE APPENDIX B for more details.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they will miss work as lessons start promptly each day. Children who are late also do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information

and news for the day, and they disrupt lessons for others; this can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage further absence.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The standard school day starts at **8.50am** for Juniors (KS2) and **8.55am** for Infant (EYFS and KS1) and we expect your child to be in class at that time. **If they are later than this they will need to come into school via the main entrance.**

Teaching staff will arrive on the playgrounds 5 minutes before this time each day so that parents and carers can quickly inform staff of any important information; for example if a child has had a troubled sleep due to asthma etc. Longer discussions can be scheduled at this time with staff in order to discuss lengthier or private issues which might have an effect on a child's behaviour or health and wellbeing but which CANNOT impact upon the swift start to daily learning and completion of the morning registers.

Registers are marked by **8:50am** for KS2 children and **8.55am** for EYFS and KS1 children and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in class by that time.

At **9.10am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

### **Absence in Term Time, including Holiday Requests**

*'Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their child/ren out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable. [P.58 Working Together to Improve School Attendance. May 2022]*

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the school, please note that you will need to **complete a 'Request for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances During Term Time'** form, which is available as an editable document on the school APP, or a paper version is available at the main office, **BEFORE departing when possible.** In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

*It is EXTREMELY RARE for a request for the purpose of a family holiday to be authorised.*

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

APPENDIX B will be followed in relation to individual requests made in this way.

### **School Attendance Targets**

The Government does not set specific attendance targets, but as a school we are expected to set our own.

An attendance rate of **96% or above** is considered good at Sherdley.

Persistent absence (PA) is defined as an attendance rate of 90% or below.

Through the school year, we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made and also to reward children for consistent, positive attendance and punctuality.

We have a weekly class attendance league which is shared with the children together with a class certificate and individual sticker. This enables children to work towards a WEEKLY reward.

We have class winners of the 'Punctuality Clocks' that are shared during our celebration assembly. 2 winners in Key Stage 1 and 2 winners in Key Stage 2.

There is then a HALF TERMLY reward which can be worked towards – individual pupils receive 100% stickers.

Following on from this a TERMLY certificate and attendance prize is available (in the past we have had the children involved in selecting prizes - Bronze, Silver and Gold badges.)

## **Children Missing from Education**

A pupil who is absent from school for 10 consecutive days is regarded as a 'child missing from education'. In such cases a referral may be required to the local authority. Before making any such referral the school will have made all necessary enquiries to trace the pupil which could be using additionally supplied contact numbers, visiting the home, speaking to neighbours or contacting other service providers who may offer insight (for example a PVI nursery provider or foster care team). School follows the required procedures before adding or removing children from the school roll in order to ensure that children are not 'lost' from the education system. This links directly to overall safeguarding.

## **Responsibilities for Attendance**

*'It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organization, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the Governing Body, the Local Authority, and other local partners. [P.6 Working Together to Improve School Attendance. May 2022]*

All class teachers and class based LSAs have responsibility for monitoring the attendance of pupils in their class, linked to their attainment and also as a part of basic Safeguarding principles. Staff are expected to monitor attendance and record concerns on the CPOMS system, using the appropriate Attendance category. Staff are expected to discuss these concerns with parents/carers and pupils in order to quickly identify the reasons for absences and for support to be put in place and monitored. These concerns will also be monitored and actioned by the following, using the Graduated Approach to Attendance:

**Mr A McCoy                      Head Teacher and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead**

**Mrs K Bennett                Deputy Head Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead**

**Mr M Davies                    Assistant Head Teacher**

**Mrs J Stroud                    Assistant Head Teacher**

**Mrs C Eccleston              Attendance Support Officer**

**Mrs A-M Lakey                Children and Families Community Support Officer**

## **Summary**

Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils and is therefore seen as everyone's responsibility at Sherdley. We have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across the school community, working with parents and carers, who have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child/ren attend regularly.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance.

## **Equality Statement**

At Sherdley Primary, we aim to ensure that no member of the school community experiences harassment, less favourable treatment or discrimination within the learning environment because of their age; any disability they may have; their ethnicity, colour or national origin; their gender; their religion or beliefs. We value the diversity of individuals within our school and do not discriminate against anyone because of 'differences'. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when devising and implementing school policies and procedures.

## **Links to Other Policies and School Documents**

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

PPG Strategy

Pupil Handbook

Remote Learning Plan

## **Date of Policy & Reviews**

Reviewed: January 2023 – Updated and amended with Appendix B Graduated Response Stages to Attendance  
July 2022 – Updated following Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022  
January 2022 and updated in line with current COVID situation nationally.  
September 2014 and updated May 2015, November 2015, September 2016, Sept 2018 and Feb 2021

To be reviewed: Spring 2025

## APPENDIX A

### WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE FLOW CHART

The following flow chart is taken from p.8 of Working Together to Improve Attendance in Schools. May 2022.

The Sherdley Attendance Flow Chart (APPENDIX B) has been designed to reflect this graded approach to attendance.

#### EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



#### MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



#### LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



#### FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



#### FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



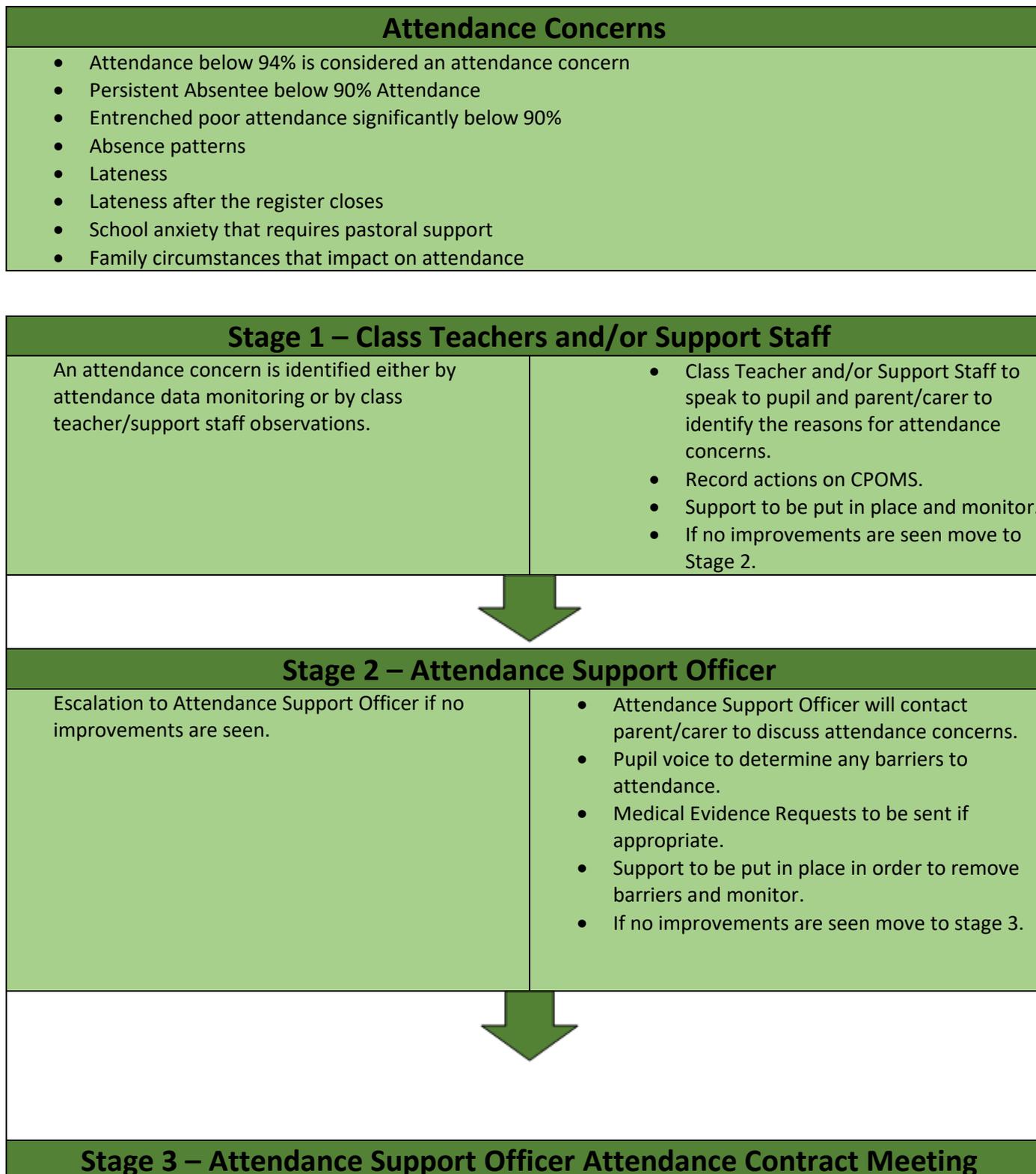
#### ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## APPENDIX B

### GRADUATED APPROACH STAGES TO ATTENDANCE

In order to ensure that all attendance concerns are responded to efficiently, a graduated approach has been implemented at Sherdley Primary School. The following 5 stages describe how we will respond to attendance concerns.



<p>Escalation to an Attendance Contract meeting if poor attendance continues and improvements are not seen.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with parents/carers and arrange a meeting to discuss how to improve attendance.</li> <li>• Clear expectations for improvements to be discussed and set out in an attendance contract.</li> <li>• Home visits may occur if absence continues.</li> <li>• Monitor and follow-up meeting to be arranged</li> </ul>
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**Stage 4 – Senior Leadership Team**

<p>Escalation to Headteacher and/or Senior Leaders if absence persists and support is not working or not being engaged with.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review previous stages.</li> <li>• Attendance meeting to be arranged with a member of the Senior Leadership Team where concerns will be discussed, and next steps outlined.</li> <li>• A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued.</li> <li>• Monitor and follow-up meeting to be arranged.</li> <li>• If absence persists, move to stage 5.</li> </ul>
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**Stage 5 - Education Welfare and/or Social Care Referral**

<p>Escalation to Education Welfare and/or Social Care in order to protect the pupils right to an education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review previous stages.</li> <li>• EHAT (Early Help Assessment Tool) will be considered.</li> <li>• Possible referral to social care and/or Education Welfare.</li> <li>• Possible statutory intervention or prosecution.</li> </ul>
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