

Bilston Church of England Primary School

'Hand in hand towards faith and high achievements'



Attendance Policy

Our Vision

'Hand in hand together with faith we will strive to achieve all things'

'I am able to do all things through him (Jesus) who strengthens me'

Philippians 4:13

Approved by Governors at:	
Date approved:	
Review date:	
Chair of committee:	



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Who is the policy for?

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

This policy should be read alongside the statutory guidance documents on parental responsibility measures, children missing education, supporting pupils with medical conditions at school, suspensions and exclusions, alternative provision, and safeguarding.

Section 1: 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 Bilston Church of England Primary is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, our school and outside agencies work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement involve close interaction with our curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It is not solely the role of a single member of staff, it is a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

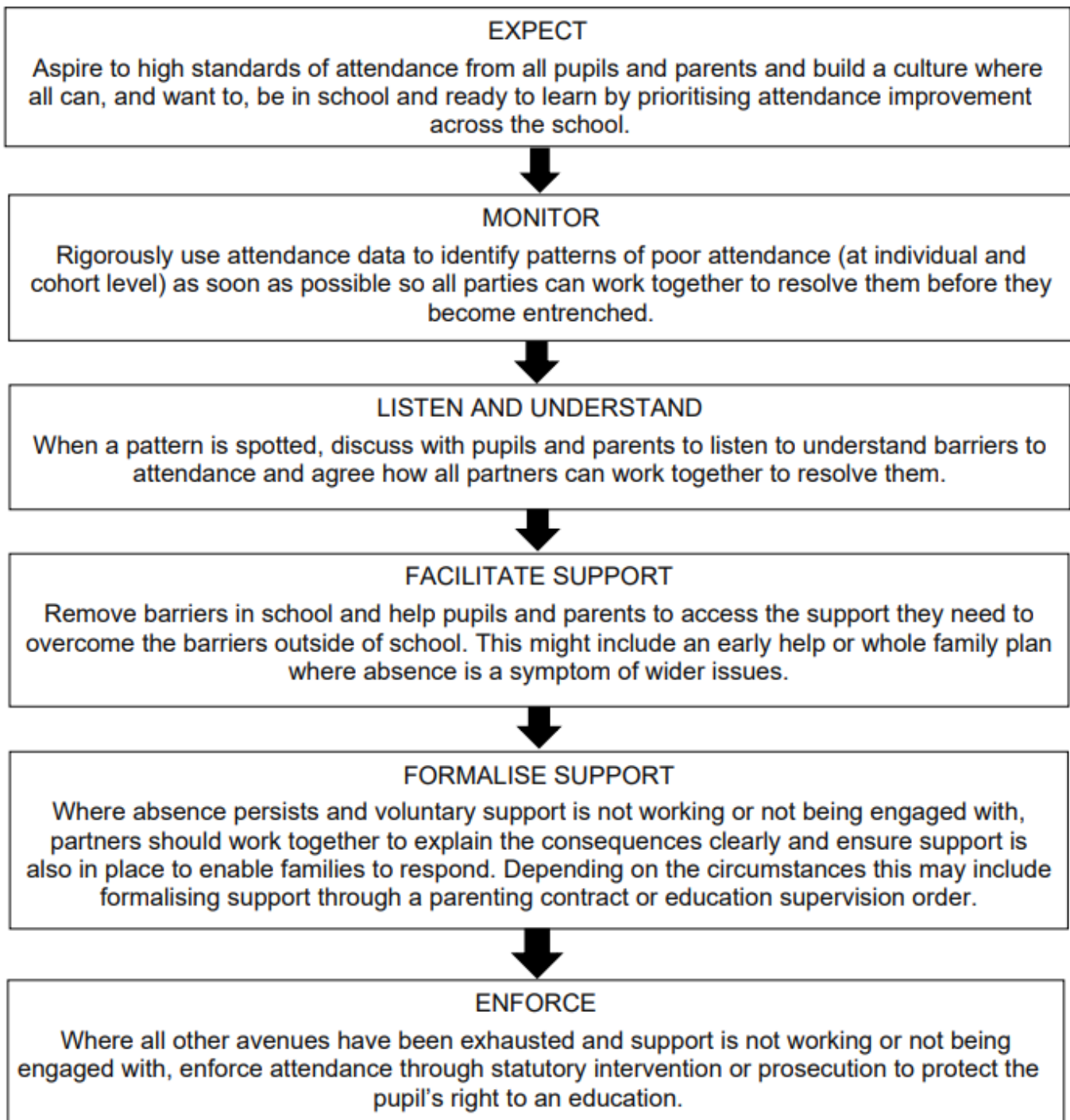
Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend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

Good attendance at our school ensures that a child obtains the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

Working together to improve attendance.

At Bilston Church of England, we successfully treat the root causes of absence and work together to remove barriers to attendance, at home, in school. Working together with local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:



[Attendance expectations at Bilston Church of England](#)

We promote the benefits of good attendance at school, set high expectations for every pupil, communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents, systematically analyse our data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts, and work effectively with our local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. We also recognise that attendance cannot be seen in isolation and that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils want to attend and can learn and thrive.

To manage and improve attendance effectively, Bilston C of E:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

- Have a clear school attendance policy which is shared with all staff, pupils and parents
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
 - ❖ Phone call on the first day of absence if parents have not already notified school
 - ❖ If contact can not be made text messages is sent
 - ❖ IF no contact has been made by the 2nd day of absence, then a home visit will be made by EWO or DDSL.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place. This is managed through SIMS and FFT 360 attendance.
- Our priority is to build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- All concerns are recorded on CPOMS the school's internal online system for Safeguarding.

How we develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance

We recognise that good attendance is a learned behaviour and recognise the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. We understand that good attendance is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of our school's ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school attendance, we:

- Recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, it is a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- Recognise the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, we build it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium).
- Recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and our Head Teacher; Mr Gary Gentle has overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school.

As the designated lead he:

- Ensures that our school has a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes, oversight of data analysis, and communicating messages to pupils and parents.
- Makes sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Makes sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding. There are designated staff to provide pastoral support – Miss S Wootton, EWO who works with families, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders, the local authority's School Attendance Support Team and other partners.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents through newsletters, social media, MME. Helping parents to

understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development. It includes clarity on the short- and long-term consequences of poor attendance.

- We visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. Through displays, assemblies and communication with parents.
- We are sensitively and without discrimination, include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year group, class/form and individual level. Each week in Achievement assemblies there is a celebration of the best class attendance for each Key Stage. At the end of the academic year school rewards the best class attendance with a school visit. Children who gain 100% attendance also receive a prize.
- Recognise that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies.
- Recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

Attendance Procedures

School Day

- ❖ School day starts at 9am but the school doors open at 8:45 am for children to filter in. there are always staff on external doors and gates to greet parents and children.
- ❖ Between 9am and 9.10 a school register is taken via SIMS. Children who are absent are marked in the class absence book. If a class teacher has been informed off why a child is absent this will be recorded in the absence book.
- ❖ Register close at 9.10 am
- ❖ Once registers are closed the office attendance manager records the attendance and follows up any children who are absent with phone calls.
- ❖ At the start of afternoon periods class teachers take an afternoon register via SIMS
- ❖ School closes at 3.30pm and class teachers dismiss children.

Designated leads for attendance

- ❖ Gary Gentle Head Teacher
- ❖ Caroline Farnsworth Attendance Officer
- ❖ Jacky Thornton DHT/DDSL
- ❖ Stephanie Wootton Pastoral Manager/DDSL
- ❖ EWO

Procedures for reporting Absences

- ❖ Parents are required to call school on the morning of the first absences to explain reasons, school office is open from 7:30 am there is also the options to leave a message. Messages are read at the beginning of every school day.

How do we promote good attendance?

- ❖ Weekly Achievement assemblies to celebrate class attendance.
- ❖ Certificates every half term for full attendance.
- ❖ Termly certificates with prizes for full term attendance
- ❖ A best class attendance for the academic year, this is rewarded with a free visit.
- ❖ 100% attendance award, this is rewarded with a free visit or fun event in school.

Using data to target attendance improvement.

The main system used for attendance is SIMS but we also use FFT 360 attendance and STAT Sheffield as these systems provided information to compare children's attainment alongside attendance.

- Analysis of weekly data via online systems to identify
 - Individuals who are below school targets
 - Cohorts and classes
 - Vulnerable groups comparison against no vulnerable.

Reducing persistent and severe absences

School employs an EWO to work alongside the school attendance officer. If children are persistent in their absences, then a meeting will be called with parents to discuss the concerns also offer support and help to improve their child's attendance. If supported is needed, then our pastoral manager we offer an Early Help. At Bilston C of E we also monitor persistent lateness of children. If children are persistent in arriving late to school parents will receive a phone call from the school attendance officer or pastoral manager, once again an offer will be made for parent(s) to attend a meeting to see if any support is needed.

If parent(s) are struggling to get children to school then we offer the school minibus service. In circumstances where parent(s) are struggling this service has been provided free removing the barriers to attendance.

Fixed Penalty Notice

School will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice if parents remove their child(ren) from school for 5 or more consecutive days for an unauthorized holiday in term time.

Admission Register (the school roll)

At Bilston C of E Primary our admission register contains specific personal information of every pupil: Name, DOB, UPN, address, parent information including national insurance number, ethnicity, FSM/PP. Admission dates are also included in the register.

The register uses different codes to identify if a child is present or absent giving reasons for absences:

- I authorised
- O unauthorized
- N unexplained absence
- H authorised holiday
- G unauthorised holiday
- R religious observance.

Registers are shared with our local authority; Wolverhampton and DFE. We recognise that registers are legal records, and we preserve every entry in the attendance and admission register for 3 years from the date of entry.

If amendments are made due to the reasons for absence not being obtained at the time, then the register will still show the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made and the name and title of the person who made the amendment.

Granting leaves of absence

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. At Bilston C of E we will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

If a leave of absence is granted, it is for our headteacher Mr G Gentle to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Therefore, as only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities.

As a school we recognise that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as those are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This includes:

- ❖ Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- ❖ Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. In addition, schools should work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.
- ❖ We establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- ❖ Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
- ❖ Ensure data is regularly monitored for these groups including at governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. We understand that the local authority; Wolverhampton are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education.

In all cases, Bilston C of E will be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents and will work with pupils and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Modified Timetables

We understand that all pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education a modified timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A modified timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

At Bilston C of E we will only put a part – time timetable in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at school or alternative provision. We ensure that there are formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a parttime timetable, we understand a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day will be treated as authorised absence.

Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School Head

In addition to the benefits for all pupils, good attendance at school also provides an additional safeguard for vulnerable pupils. We recognise that absence for pupils with a social worker, however, has been historically higher, with a quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker persistently absent compared to less than 10% of those who had never been in need.

At Bilston C of E we therefore understand the importance of redoubling our efforts to improve attendance for this group and build on the progress made by Virtual School Heads since the expansion of the programme to provide strategic oversight of the education of pupils with a social worker.

Working together with local authorities that are part of our Children in Care (CIC) Virtual Schools we:

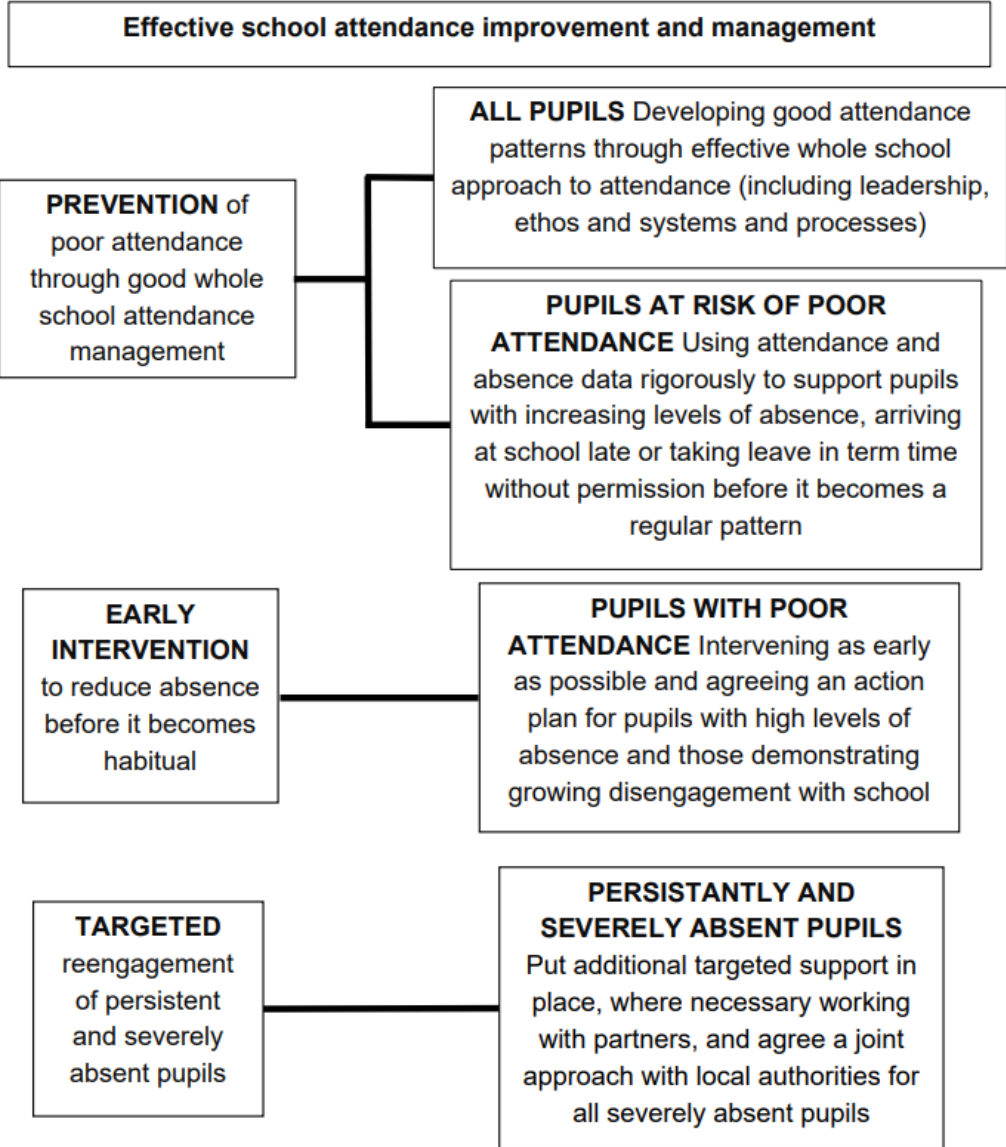
- Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area, including those looked-after by the local authority.
- Set aspirational targets for attendance of pupils with a social worker in the area and put in place personal education plans for pupils looked-after.
- Provide training for designated teachers about their role in promoting the attendance of children who have ever needed a social worker.

- Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.
- Work across children’s social care services to make sure all social workers recognise the importance of good school attendance, and that attendance is built into every child in need or child protection plan where attendance is a concern.

We know that to facilitate effective working across the local authority, schools are expected to inform a pupil’s social worker if there are unexplained absences from school. Children missing education officers or a school’s point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team should also inform a pupil’s social worker if their name is to be deleted from the school register.

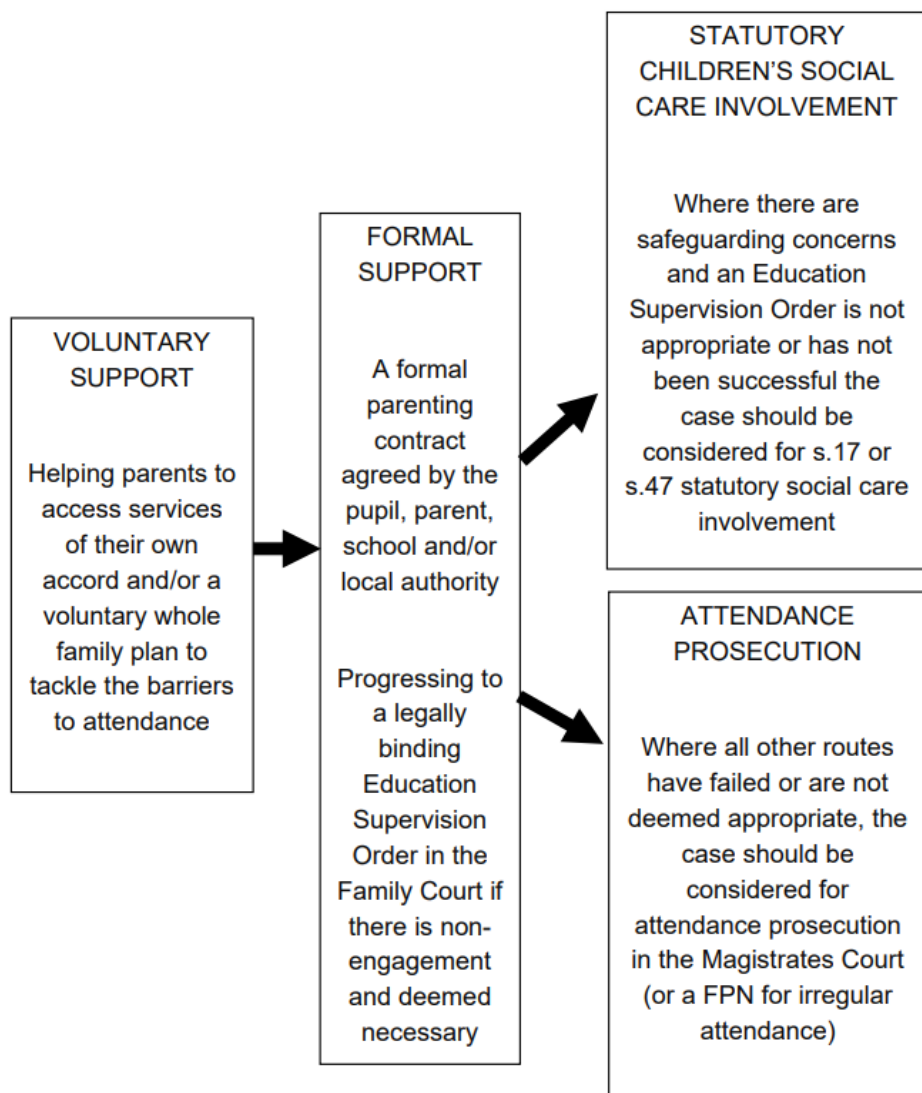
Persistent and severe absence

At Bilston C of E Primary school, we follow this model to ensure that attendance is improved and managed effectively:



Attendance legal intervention

As absence is so often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, schools, trusts and local authorities should always work together with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where that is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis.



Parenting Contracts Purpose of parenting contracts and when they may be appropriate.

At Bilston C of E we will use a parenting contract as formal written agreement between parents and the school or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. A contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate. A parenting contract is not a punitive tool it is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. Parents cannot be compelled to enter a contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.

There is no obligation on our school or local authority to offer a contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but a contract will always be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution.

The aim from the outset should be for the parent(s), the school and the local authority to work in partnership. Where a school and/or local authority decide to use a parenting contract, a meeting will be arranged with the parent(s). The meeting will explain the purpose of a parenting contract and why using one would be beneficial in the family's circumstances. The parent(s) will be asked to outline their views on the pupil's attendance at school, any underlying issues and how they believe these should be addressed. The meeting will also allow them to share their views on the idea of a parenting contract and what type of support they think would be helpful to secure the pupil's regular attendance. Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without good reason or notification, further attempts will be made to contact them and arrange another meeting but all attempts at support should be recorded.

One parenting contract may be arranged with all parents, or in circumstances where it is desirable to have different requirements for each parent then separate parenting contracts for each parent should be arranged.

Contents of a parenting contract

All parenting contracts should contain:

- Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
- A statement from our school and/or local authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
- A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.

The requirements specified, and the support provided, will depend on the individual case, and will be tailored to the needs of the individual parent and family. There is not, therefore, a prescribed list, but requirements may include:

- Measures to ensure the pupil attends school or alternative provision punctually and regularly
- Requiring the parent to attend meetings with the school and/or local authority
- Accessing or partaking in the support or programmes offered
- Working with or accessing other separate support provided to the pupil at school level (e.g. being on report)

The support provided to help the parent satisfy those requirements may include:

- Provision of a lead practitioner to support the family
- Signposting or referrals to wider local authority or health services that might support the family (e.g. housing needs, drug and alcohol support)
- Signposting or referrals to voluntary and community sector programmes or support (e.g. foodbanks or community support groups)
- Formal interventions such as family group conferencing, peer mentoring or literacy classes
- Support and advisory services (e.g. benefit support)
- Formal parenting programmes (e.g. a course with a specified number of sessions)

Parenting contracts do not have a minimum or maximum duration. Each individual contract should set out the duration it will be in place, and most are for between 3 and 12 months but can be longer if needed.

Once the requirements and support elements of the contract have been agreed, our school and/or local authority and the parent should write up the contract together and sign it. The contract will be

written in language that the parent can easily understand (including a translation where necessary). All parties, including other partners working with the family, should be given a copy.

Non-compliance with a parenting contract

Our school and/or local authority will work with the parent to gain their cooperation and compliance throughout the parenting contract process.

Where a parent does not comply with the requirements set out in the contract, our lead practitioner will contact the parent and seek an explanation and decide whether it is reasonable, and the contract remains useful. If the explanation shows that the contract is proving difficult to comply with through no fault of the parent, then a meeting will be arranged with the parent to review and amend it. Where no explanation is given, or our lead practitioner is not satisfied with the explanation, they will serve the parent with a warning to explain that the contract is not working and may be terminated, and another course of action pursued, if the parent does not engage. This may be in the form of a letter, and record of it will be kept.

If there are further instances of non-compliance, we will arrange a meeting with the parent to review the contract and discuss how it can be made to work. Following this meeting, our school and/or local authority should decide whether the noncompliance is undermining the contract to the extent that it is no longer useful in which case an alternative course of action (such as a different legal intervention) would need to be decided upon. The decision and reasons will be recorded.

As a school we understand that failure by the parent, school, or local authority to keep to the terms of the parenting contract cannot lead to action for breach of contract or for civil damages. There is no criminal sanction for a parent's failure to comply with, or refusal to sign, a parenting contract. If the pupil's irregular attendance continues or escalates to the point where prosecution is deemed appropriate, however, any failure or refusal may be presented as evidence in the case. It is therefore important that any non-compliance with the contract is recorded so that it can be presented in court if necessary.

Education Supervision Orders Purpose of ESOs and when they may be appropriate

Where a voluntary early help plan, or formal parenting contract has not been successful, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) can be a useful alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. In deciding whether to progress to an ESO, our school and local authority will have exhausted voluntary support and be clear that making the order would be beneficial for the pupil and parent. Where safeguarding concerns exist, our lead practitioner will also discuss with the school's designated safeguarding lead and children's social care services and agree an ESO would be a more suitable option than a section.17 (Children in Need) or section.47 (Child Protection) plan. In all cases, local authorities must fully consider using an ESO before moving forward to prosecution.

ESOs are made through the Family or High Court, rather than Magistrates Court. They give the local authority a formal role in advising, helping and directing the pupil and parent(s) to ensure the pupil receives an efficient, full-time, suitable education. For the duration of the ESO, the parent's duties to secure the child's education and regular attendance are superseded by a duty to comply with any directions given by the local authority under the ESO.

The order initially lasts for one year, but extensions can be secured within the last 3 months for a period of up to 3 years at a time.

Attendance Prosecution Purpose of prosecution and when it may be appropriate

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.

Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed or where support has been deemed inappropriate in the circumstances of the individual case. Where it is decided to pursue prosecution, only local authorities can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs, including in the preparation of court documentation.

Parenting Orders Purpose of parenting orders and when they may be appropriate

Parenting orders are an ancillary order that can be imposed by the Court following conviction for non-attendance alongside a fine and/or community order. Parents' agreement is not required before an order is made. They may be appropriate where the parent has not engaged in support to improve their child's attendance and where compulsion to do so would help change parental behaviour.

Contents of a parenting order

The order requires a parent to comply with the arrangements specified in the order by the Court which can include a requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions (e.g. parenting education or parenting support classes) where they will receive help and support to enable them to improve their child's attendance for up to 3 months.

All parenting orders must specify a 'responsible officer' which will be named on the order. This should be the most appropriate lead practitioner working with the family.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Purpose of fixed penalty notices and when they may be appropriate

Fixed penalty notices are served on parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. Fixed penalty notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school and the absence constitutes an offence. Fixed penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences, which should usually be the parent or parents with day to day responsibility for the pupil's attendance.