

Attendance Policy

OUR SCHOOL PRAYER:

*What does the **Lord** ask of you?*

To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6vs.8

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Statement of intent

In our school, our Christian vision shapes all we do. All members of the school community are committed to upholding the St Michael’s Church of England Christian values:

- to show love, care, and kindness to all in our community
- to value what we have and to share with others
- to enable everyone to achieve their full potential

St Michael’s Church of England High School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Students cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

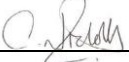
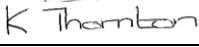

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some students find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with students and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as student premium – can have on improving student attendance.

We are committed to:

- promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits
- ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all
- intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our students
- rewarding regular attendance
- building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance
- working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies
- ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the education act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude, and to any send they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents, and students
- regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require more support

The school’s attendance officer is Nicola Cartwright and can be contacted via nicola.cartwright@st-michaels.sandwell.sch.uk. Staff, parents, and students will be expected to contact the attendance officer for queries or concerns about attendance.

Signed by:			
	_____	Co-Chair of Governors	Date: <u>08/12/2022</u>
	_____	Co-Chair of Governors	Date: <u>08/12/2022</u>
	_____	Headteacher	Date: <u>08/12/2022</u>

Date of adoption: April 2010
Date of review: 8th December 2022
Review date: December 2025

1. Legal framework

1.1 This policy has due regard to the following legislation and guidance, including, but not limited to:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education'

1.2 This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Students with Medical Conditions Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Attendance Officer Home Visit Policy
- Students with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

2. Definitions

2.1 St Michael's Church of England High School defines "absence" as:

- a) not attending school at any time without authorisation

2.2 St Michael's Church of England High School defines "persistent absenteeism (PA)" as:

- b) missing 10 per cent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

3. Key roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school
- promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies
- arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role
- working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals
- ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation
- handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's complaints procedures policy
- having regard to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

3.2 The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures
- Ensuring that every student has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence

3.3 Staff are responsible for:

- following this policy and ensuring students do so too
- ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently
- modelling good attendance behaviour
- using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual students to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated
- where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day

3.4 Parents are responsible for:

- providing accurate and up-to-date contact details
- providing the school with more than one emergency contact number
- updating the school if their details change
- the attendance of their children at school
- promoting good attendance with their children

3.5 Students are responsible for:

- attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school
- arriving punctually to lessons when at school

4. Training of staff

4.1 At St Michael's Church of England High School, we recognise that early intervention can prevent bad behaviour. As such, members of staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk students.

4.2 Teachers and support staff will receive training on the attendance policy as part of their new starter induction.

4.3 Teachers and support staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

5. Parent expectations

5.1 Parents/carers/guardians are expected to ensure that their children attend school every day as they are legally responsible for their children's attendance at school.

5.2 Parents/carers/guardians are expected to report any absence to the school on the first day and each subsequent day of absence.

5.3 In addition, written evidence in support of any absences should be provided by parents/carers/guardians. Doctor's notes, appointment letters or other relevant medical evidence should be provided where appropriate.

6. Student expectations

- 6.1 Students will be expected to attend school every day and will sign an agreement at the beginning of each school year (appendix b).
- 6.2 Students are expected to attend morning and afternoon registration sessions punctually.
- 6.3 St Michael's Church of England High School expects all students to attend lessons punctually.
- 6.4 Students will be expected to report any absence immediately to the relevant member of staff.

7. Absence Procedures

- 7.1 Parents/carers/guardians must contact the school before 8:30 am on the first day of any absence and each day of absence and each day after.
- 7.2 Parents/carers/guardians must send a note on the first day their child returns with a signed explanation as to why they were absent. This must be done even if we have already received a phone call.
- 7.3 Alternatively, parents/carers/guardians may visit the school and report to the school office where arrangements will be made to speak to a member of staff.
- 7.4 A phone call/text message/email will be made to the parent/carer/guardian of any child who has not reported their absence on the first day that they do not attend school.
- 7.5 An absence sweep will take place on a weekly basis. Staff will make home visits to students who are absent on the targeted day.
- 7.6 The school will always follow up any absences in order to:
 - a) ascertain the reason for the absence
 - b) ensure that proper safeguarding action is being taken
 - c) identify whether the absence is authorised by the school or not
 - d) identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census
- 7.7 If student attendance drops below 96 per cent, appropriate action will be taken by the school.
- 7.8 In the case of persistent absence, arrangements will be made for parents/carers/guardians to speak to the staff member, pastoral leader, head of year, or headteacher as appropriate. In addition, governors may arrange a meeting with the student and their parents/carers/guardians to discuss persistent absence. If the parent fails to attend this meeting, the governors will meet with student on their own.
- 7.9 St Michael's Church of England High School may inform the LA of any student who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission.
- 7.10 Where a student has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the student from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the student after making reasonable enquiries.

8. Attendance register

- 8.1 The school uses SIMs and Go 4 Schools to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.
- 8.2 The designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether the student is:
- a) present
 - b) absent
 - c) attending an approved educational visit
 - d) unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- 8.3 St Michael's Church of England High School will use the national attendance codes to enable the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way.
- 8.4 Where a student is attending another school at which they are registered (for example, a student referral unit (PRU)), the attendance officer will confirm the student's attendance at the other school on a daily basis.
- 8.5 When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code # will be used for the relevant students who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, for example, induction days.
- 8.6 All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment, and the name and role title of the person who made the amendment.
- 8.7 Every entry into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

9. Staff member

- 9.1 If unauthorised absence becomes an issue, students will be referred to the staff member/HoY who will attempt to resolve the situation through an attendance contract with parent/carer/guardian agreement.
- 9.2 If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the local Attendance and Prosecution Service has the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices.

10. Lateness

- 10.1 Punctuality is of the utmost importance, and lateness will not be tolerated.
- 10.2 The school day starts at 8:40 am; students should be in their form classroom at this time.
- 10.3 Registers are marked by 8:40 am; students will receive a late mark if they are not in their form classroom by this time. Two instances of lateness in one week will result in a detention.
- 10.4 The register closes at 9:10 am; students will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.
- 10.5 Attendance after the register closes will receive a mark to show that they are on-site but will count as an absent mark.

11. Term time leave

- 11.1 At St Michael's Church of England High School, our aim is to prepare students for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents/carers/guardians to observe the school holidays as prescribed.
- 11.2 Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise holidays during term time.
- 11.3 Leave during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- 11.4 Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis. Requests for leave must be submitted on the Leave of Absence Request form (appendix c).
- 11.5 If term time leave is not granted, taking a student out of school will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may attract sanctions such as a penalty notice.

12. Religious observances

- 12.1 St Michael's Church of England High School will allow one day for the observance of religious festivals.
- 12.2 Parents/carers/guardians must inform the school in advance if absences are required for a day of religious observance.
- 12.3 The day of absence must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious board to which the student's parents/carers/guardians belong.

13. Appointments

- 13.1 As far as possible, parents/carers/guardians should attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- 13.2 Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to the school.
- 13.3 If the appointment requires the student to leave during the school day, the student must be signed out by a parent/carer/guardian.
- 13.4 Students must attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.
- 13.5 If a student's attendance is under 96%, the school will make the decision about whether the appointment will be authorised.

14. Students with Additional Health Needs

- 14.1 Students who have additional health needs that results in longer-term absence will be managed under the Students with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy (see appendix e).

15. Persistent Absence (PA)

15.1 There are various groups of students who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:

- children in need
- LAC
- young carers
- students who are eligible for FSM
- students with EAL
- students with SEND
- students who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

15.2 The school will ensure it provides support to students at risk of PA, in conjunction with all relevant external authorities where necessary.

15.3 The school will use a number of methods to help support students at risk of PA to attend school. These include:

- offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps in learning
- meeting with the student and their parent to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having
- establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support
- leading weekly check-ins to review progress and assess the impact of support
- making regular contact with the student's parent to discuss progress
- assessing whether an ehc plan or ihp may be appropriate
- considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including with regard to additional vulnerability

15.4 The school will focus particularly on students who have rates of absence over 50 percent and will work with the LA and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these students are facing.

15.5 Where a student at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g., social services, to support the student in line with the school's duty of care. The school will also bear in mind that the continuation of severe PA following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

16. Exceptional circumstances

16.1 Exceptional circumstances include when a student is unable to attend because:

- a) the school is fully or partially closed
- b) transport provided by the school or LA is not available and the student's home is not within walking distance
- c) there has been widespread disruption to travel services which have prevented the student from attending
- d) the student is in custody and will be detained for less than four months

16.2 Absences for exceptional circumstances do not affect your child's attendance.

17. Truancy

- 17.1 Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.
- 17.2 All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of students and understand the importance of continuity in each student's learning.
- 17.3 Any student with permission to leave the school during the day must sign out at the reception and sign back in again on their return.
- 17.4 Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a student might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the headteacher is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the student not attending school.
- 17.5 The following procedures will be taken in the event of truancy:
- if any further truancy occurs, the school will make a referral to the Attendance Support Officer at the local authority
 - a penalty notice will be issued where there are holidays in term time

18. Missing children

- 18.1 Students will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a student going missing whilst at school:
- the member of staff who has noticed the missing student will inform the headteacher immediately
 - the office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search
 - a member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the headteacher
 - the following areas will be systematically searched:
 - all classrooms
 - all toilets
 - changing rooms
 - the library
 - any outbuildings
 - the school grounds
 - available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted
 - if the student has not been found, then the parents of the student will be notified
 - the school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided
 - if the parents have had no contact from the student, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted
 - if the missing student has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any send, then the appropriate personnel will be informed
 - when the student has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the student to ensure they are safe and well
 - parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the student has been located

18.2 The headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure that students understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Management Policy.

19. Rewarding good attendance

19.1 St Michael's Church of England High School acknowledges and rewards good attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- a) gold, silver, and bronze badges
- b) recognition in assemblies
- c) the opportunity to earn rewards and achievement points through house competitions

19.2 School trips and events are a privilege. Where attendance drops below 96 per cent, these privileges may be taken away.

19.3 Attendance at the Year 11 prom requires 96 per cent attendance across all five years.

20. Monitoring and analysing absence

20.1 The attendance officer will monitor and analyse attendance data weekly to ensure that intervention and support is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

20.2 The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence, for:

- The school cohort as a whole.
- Individual year groups.
- Year groups preparing for exams.
- Individual students.
- Demographic groups, e.g., students from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds.
- Other groups of students, e.g., students with SEND, LAC, and students eligible for FSM.
- Students at risk of PA.

20.3 The attendance officer will conduct thorough analysis of the above data on a half-termly, termly, and full-year basis to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

- Patterns in uses of certain codes.
- Particular days of poor attendance.
- Subjects which have low lesson attendance.
- Historic trends of attendance and absence.
- Barriers to attendance.

20.4 The attendance officer will provide regular reports to Heads of Year and Form Tutors to enable them to track the attendance of students and to implement attendance procedures. The attendance officer will also be responsible for monitoring how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future.

20.5 The governing board will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

20.6 The school will also benchmark its attendance data against local-, regional- and national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools.

21. Monitoring and review

21.1 This policy will be reviewed on a three-year basis by the headteacher in agreement with the governing board. The next scheduled review date for this policy is December 2025.

Appendix a – Attendance Flowchart

98% +
Attendance

- Text sent to parents thanking them for their support (staff member)
- Students of 100% receive badge at reward assembly each term (HOY)
- Students with 98%+ receive certificate at reward assembly each term (HOY)
- Form Tutors to recognise the above in form time using attendance display half termly

95% - 97%

- Letter of concern sent home with an explanation of how attendance can affect achievement (staff member)
- Concerns shared with student in regards to the consequences of poor attendance (HOY)
- Targets set to improve attendance (HOY & Form Tutor)
- Monitored with student on a rotational basis (Form Tutor)
- HOY to monitor progress and address if measures fail by meeting with parents
- If parents are experiencing any difficulties that we can help with by making the necessary referrals to appropriate agencies such as CAMH, CAF, (counselling, family support, Targeted youth support etc.) then referrals must be made.**

91% - 94%

- Letter of concern sent home with an explanation of how attendance can affect achievement and the legal consequences (staff member)
- Concerns shared with student in regards to the consequences of poor attendance (HOY)
- Targets set to improve attendance (HOY & Form Tutor)
- Monitored with student on a rotational basis (Form Tutor)
- HOY to monitor progress and address if measures fail by meeting with parents and student
- HOY and Form tutor to monitor
- Review meeting takes place (HOY)
- If parents are experiencing any difficulties that we can help address by making the necessary referrals to appropriate agencies such as CAMH, CAF (counselling, family support, Targeted youth support etc.) referrals must be made.**

90% and
below

- Refer to Education Welfare (HOY & staff member)
- Letter sent to parents to inform them of the referral (staff member)
- Education Welfare should send a letter to give them 15 days to improve
- Close monitoring to take place over the 15 days (HOY)
- Liaise with parent to inform of progress during the 15 days (HOY)
- When student attendance reaches 87%, referral to Governors arranged and an attendance contract signed at meeting, review date set
- If parents are experiencing any difficulties that we can help address by making the necessary referrals to appropriate agencies such as CAMH, CAF (counselling, family support, Targeted youth support etc.) referrals must be made.**

Appendix b – Attendance Agreement Forms

Student Attendance Agreement

I agree to attend school and understand the consequences I may face if my attendance drops below 100%. I will ensure that St Michael's Church of England High School is made immediately aware of when I will not reasonably be able to attend and will give the school full details of my absence.

As a student of St Michael's Church of England High School, I am dedicated to:

- being in attendance every day
- always being punctual to school and lessons
- informing the school of the reason for any absence
- not missing school for trivial reasons

Student name:	_____	Date:	_____
Student signature:	_____	Date:	_____
Form tutor name:	_____	Date:	_____

MERCY • INTEGRITY • CARE AND COMPASSION • HUMILITY • ACHIEVEMENT • EGALITARIANISM • LEADERSHIP • SERVICE •


Parental Attendance Agreement

I understand that it is my responsibility to send my child to school. I agree to send *name of student* to school every day and understand the consequences if I fail to do so. When **my child** is absent from school due to exceptional circumstances, I will ensure the correct procedures are followed.

Parent/carer/guardian name:	_____	Date:	_____
Parent/carer/guardian signature:	_____	Date:	_____
Form tutor name:	_____	Date:	_____

MERCY • INTEGRITY • CARE AND COMPASSION • HUMILITY • ACHIEVEMENT • EGALITARIANISM • LEADERSHIP • SERVICE •

Appendix c – Leave of Absence Request Form

		September 2022	
		Schools Attendance Support Service Leave of Absence Request	
<p style="color: red;">Before completing this form, please read the Leave of Absence Request – Guidance Notes : Section 1 for Parent/Carers</p>			
Section A: Student's Details			
All sections must be fully completed – ONE APPLICATION PER STUDENT			
School:			
Student's Name:		Date of Birth	/ /
Student's Address:	-----		Telephone No.
	-----		Mobile Tel No.
			Post Code
Section B: Reason for Leave of Absence			
I would like to request a Leave of Absence for the above-named student:			
First date of Absence from school	/ /	Returning to school on	/ /
Head teachers can only authorise a Leave of Absence if they consider that the detail and information you provide constitutes an exceptional circumstance . You MUST provide all the details and information you would want the Head teacher to consider in deciding if your request can be granted.			

By signing this application, I understand and agree the following:			
1. That I have read the Leave of Absence Request Guidance Notes and that if I take my child on an Unauthorised Leave of Absence the school can request that I and any other Parents/Carers of my child are issued with a Penalty Notice (a fine of up to £120 in respect of each child and each Parent/Carer) and/or be subject to further legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court).			
2. That I am a Parent/Carer with whom the student 'normally resides'.			
3. That I understand it is the Head teacher's decision as to what is and what is not an "exceptional circumstance" and I should discuss any questions I have regarding the decision made by the Head Teacher prior to the absence starting.			
Parent/Carer Applicant PRINT NAME	Mn/Mrs/Ms/Miss (delete as appropriate)	Date of Birth	/ /
Parent/Carer Applicant SIGNATURE		Date of Application	/ /
Relationship to student			

Please turn over for Section C

Section C: Additional Parent/Carer(s) with Parental Responsibility

You must enter the names/dates of birth and address details of every **ADDITIONAL** adult who holds Parental Responsibility and/or care of your child.

Parent/Carer FULL NAME	Mn/Mrs/Ms/Miss (delete as appropriate)	Date of Birth	/ /
Address (if different from student's home address)	-----		
	Post Code		
Relationship to student			
Parent/Carer FULL NAME	Mn/Mrs/Ms/Miss (delete as appropriate)	Date of Birth	/ /
Address (if different from student's home address)	-----		
	Post Code		
Relationship to student			

For School Use ONLY

Request form Received	Date	/ /	Checked as complete Name of school staff:	Y/N
Information corresponds with school records & Data collection sheet included		Y/N	Head teacher's review	Date / /
Outcome: Agreed / Declined		/ /	Applicant advised of outcome	Date / /
How applicant was advised of outcome (i.e. verbally, by letter, by telephone) School staff may need to provide evidence of the above should Court proceedings follow.	-----			

School's Request for Penalty Notice

I have read the Leave of Absence Request – Guidance Notes and understand that once requested and issued a Penalty Notice cannot be withdrawn other than in the circumstances detailed.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Agreed by Headteacher	Date	/ /		
Referral to Schools Attendance Support Service	Date	/ /		
Referrer Name			Position in School	
Have you attached a copy of the student's Attendance Summary/Certificate	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Have you attached a copy of the decline letter sent to Parent/Carer(s)?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		

You do not need to complete a Legal Intervention Referral if all the above details are provided. A Leave of Absence referral can be accepted when you use MOVEit together with a **fully completed** Leave of Absence Request form, a copy of the school's decline letter to parents/carers (or confirm agreement to provide a Section 9 Witness Statement) and the student's Attendance Summary/Certificate.

Please send your completed form via MOVEit
T3335595_AS_SCHOOLNAMELOA-CHILDINITIALS

Leave of Absence Request – Guidance Notes

Section 1: For Parents/Carers

Under the Education (Student Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 absence **may not** be Authorised unless:

- (a) An application has been made in advance to the Head teacher by a Parent/Carer with whom the student normally resides (lives with most of the time); and
- (b) The Head teacher, or a person Authorised by them, considers that Leave of Absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

It is only a Parent “with whom the child normally resides” (lives with most of the time) that can apply for a Leave of Absence for their child. A Parent/Carer who does not live with the child **cannot** apply for a Leave of Absence. Any application they might make should be rejected by the school.

Parents/Carers should ensure that any Leave of Absence application is made in advance of any Leave of Absence to be taken. (Schools may have specific timescales for processing Leave of Absence applications. Parents/Carers should make sure they know what these are. Different schools may have different timescales.)

Parents/Carers should ensure that they know if their Leave of Absence application has been Authorised by the Head teacher **before** planning, booking, or paying for anything in relation to that Leave of Absence application.

Parents/Carers should ensure they provide the Head teacher with **all** the detail and information they would want the Head teacher to know in deciding if a Leave of Absence can be Authorised.

Head teachers can only Authorise a Leave of Absence if they consider that the detail and information provided by a Parent/Carer in the application can be considered as an “exceptional circumstance”.

It is at the Head teacher’s discretion to decide if the detail and information provided by a Parent/Carer can be considered as an “exceptional circumstance” and agree if any Leave of Absence can be Authorised.

Disagreements between Parents/Carers and schools in relation to what is and is not an “exceptional circumstance” cannot be considered by the Schools Attendance Support Service.

Section 2: For Schools

Schools should consider having a clear, detailed, and published policy or process that Parents/Carers should follow in applying for any Leave of Absence at their school.

Schools should decide on the format of their Leave of Absence Application Form. (The Schools Attendance Support Service provide a template document for consideration)

Schools should decide on the timescales for accepting, processing, and responding to any Leave of Absence applications received.

Such a timescale would need to consider how the school might inform the Parents/Carer of the outcome of the Head teacher’s decision so that it is received by them before any planned Leave of Absence starts.

Schools should decide that if any late or incomplete application is received if they will process this or if the Leave of Absence application cannot be considered and the Absence recorded as Unauthorised.

Schools should decide how they will advise Parents/Carers of the Head teacher's decision and if the Absence is to be Authorised or not.

Schools should mark all Absences in accordance with the Student Registration Regulations.

Schools can request that a Penalty Notice be issued to Parents/Carers should any Unauthorised Leave of Absence be taken. (Such a request should be made within 5 school days of the child's return to school after the Leave of Absence is taken)

The Schools Attendance Support Service cannot issue a Leave of Absence Penalty Notices unless a Request is made by the Head teacher to do so, that the school can provide the required information and detail that allows for the Penalty Notice to be issued in accordance with the Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/schoolattendancepenalty>

Section 3: Penalty Notices

If a Leave of Absence is not Authorised and the child is then absent from school, the Head teacher can request that the Schools Attendance Support Service issue Parents/Carers with Penalty Notices.

The Schools Attendance Support Service can only issue Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence following receipt of a request to do so by the school.

Penalty Notices are issued based on the information and detail provided by the school and in accordance with the Penalty Notice Code of Conduct

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/schoolattendancepenalty>

Once issued a Penalty Notice cannot be 'withdrawn' unless it meets the criteria detailed in Section 4 of the Code of Conduct (see below):

A penalty notice may be withdrawn if the local authority determines that:

- a) It ought not to have been issued or issued to the person named as the recipient.*
- b) The notice contains material errors, e.g., sent to the wrong address.*
- c) Where the issuer did not comply with this code of conduct*
- d) Where after the expiry of 28 days the penalty notice is unpaid, and the local authority has not started legal proceedings, or wishes to take such action under section 444.*

Unpaid Penalty Notices can result in Parents/Carers being put before the Magistrates Court and fined up to £1,000 per Parent/Carer per child plus Court costs. If a history of offences exists, parents may be prosecuted under Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996 and the court can impose fines up to £2,500 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs, impose a Parenting Order and/or sentence parents to a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.